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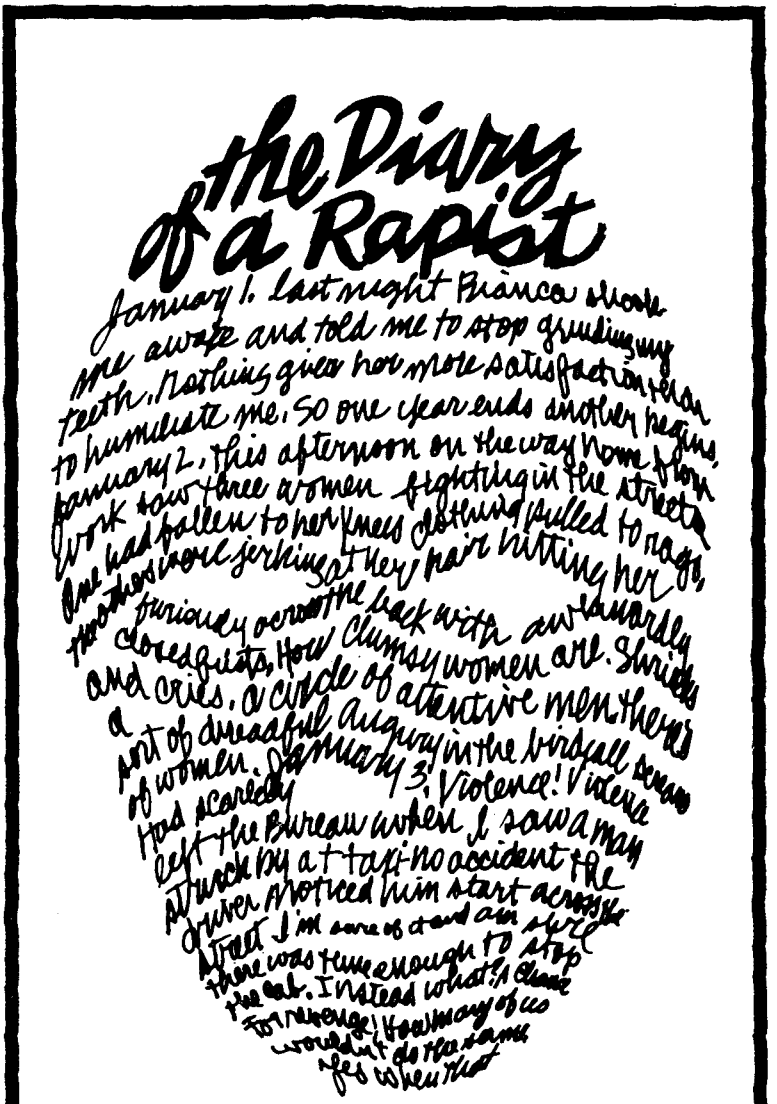


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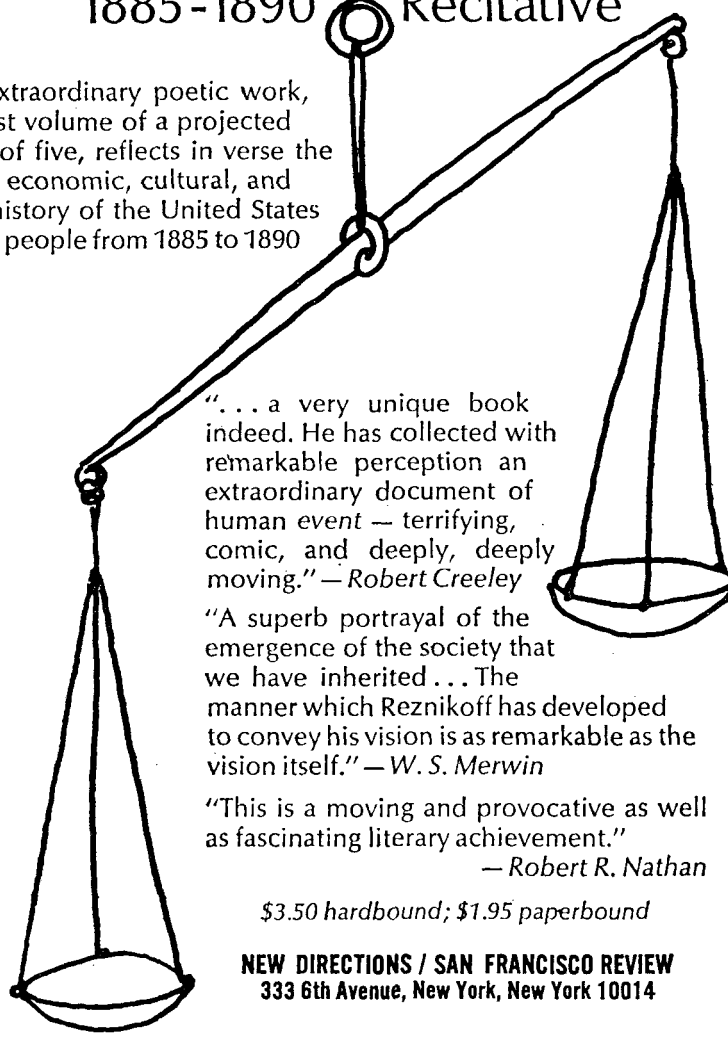

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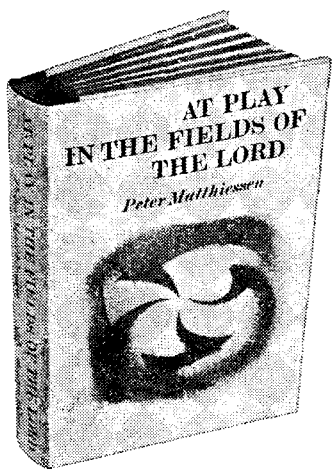


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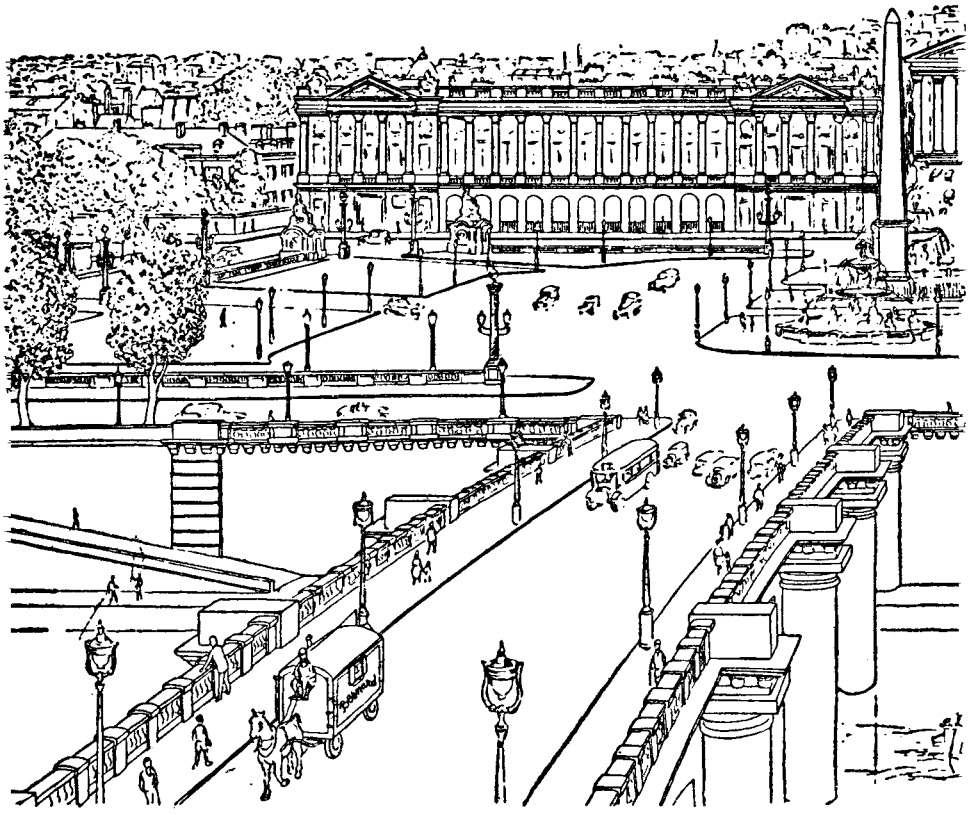

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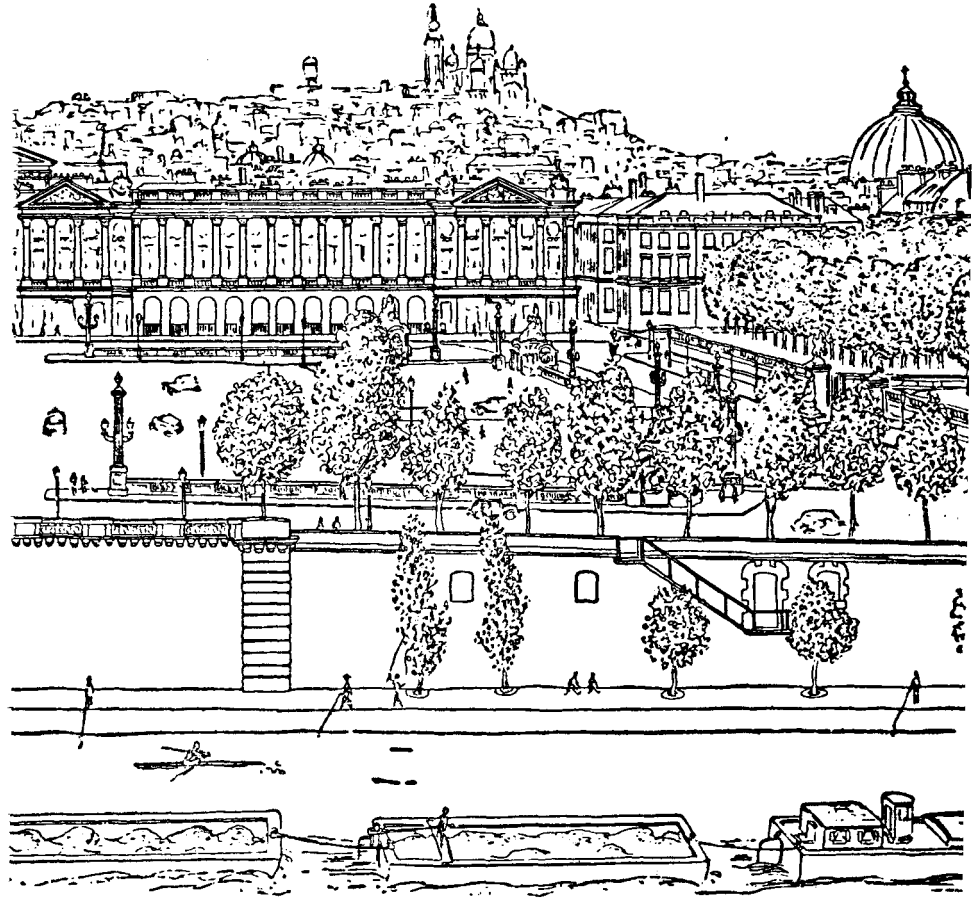

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*Ginsberg in Cuba, with plane shot down at Bay of Pigs (Photo: Tom Maschler)*

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*The Art of Poetry VIII*

# Allen Ginsberg

## *An Interview*

*Allen Ginsberg was elected King of the May by Czech students in Prague on May Day, 1965. Soon afterwards he was expelled by the Czech government. He had been traveling for several months—in Cuba, Russia, and Poland—and from Prague he flew to London to negotiate the English publication of his poems. I didn't know he was in the country, but one night in Bristol before a poetry reading I saw him in a bar. He read that night; I hadn't heard him read before and was struck that evening by the way he seemed to enter each of his poems emotionally while reading them, the performance as much a* discovery *for him as for his audience.*

*Ginsberg and I left Bristol the day after the reading, and hitchhiked to Wells Cathedral and then to Glastonbury, where he picked a flower from King Arthur's grave to send, he said, to Peter Orlovsky. He studied carefully the exhibit of tools and weapons under the huge conical chimney of the ancient kings' kitchen, as later in Cambridge he was to study the Fitzwilliam Museum's store of Blake manuscripts; Ginsberg's idea of a Jerusalemic Britain occur-*



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*ring now in the day of long hair and new music meant equally the fulfillment of Blake's predictions of Albion. As we came out of a tea shop in Glastonbury (where customers had glanced cautiously at the bearded, prophetic—and unfazed—stranger), Allen spoke of* Life's *simulacrum of a report of his Oxford encounter with Dame Edith Sitwell. ("Dope makes me come out all over in spots," she's supposed to have said.)*

*Leaving the town we were caught in a rainstorm, and took a bus to Bath. Then, hitchhiking toward London, we were unsuccessful until Ginsberg tried using Buddhist hand signals instead of thumbing; half a minute later a car stopped. Riding through Somerset he talked about* notation, *the mode he says he learned from Kerouac and has used in composing his enormous journals; he read from an account he'd made of a recent meeting with the poets Yevtushenko and Vosnessensky in Moscow, and then, looking up at a knot in a withered oak by the road, said,* "The tree has cancer of the breast... *that's what I mean...*"

*Two weeks later he was in Cambridge for a reading, and I asked him to submit to this interview. He was still busy with Blake, and roaming and musing around the University and countryside in his spare moments; it took two days to get him to sit still long enough to turn on the tape recorder. He spoke slowly and thoughtfully, tiring after two hours. We stopped for a meal when guests came—when Ginsberg learned one of them was a biochemist he questioned him about viruses and DNA for an hour—then we returned to record the other half of the tape. The words that follow are his, with little alteration save the omission of repetitive matter in half a dozen places.*

INTERVIEWER

I think Diana Trilling, speaking about your reading at Columbia, remarked that your poetry, like all poetry in English when dealing with a serious subject, naturally takes on the iambic pentameter rhythm. Do you agree?

GINSBERG

Well, it really isn't an accurate thing, I don't think. I've never actually sat down and made a technical analysis of the rhythms that I write. They're probably more near choriam-

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bic—Greek meters, dithyrambic meters—and tending toward de DA de de DA de de... what is that? Tending toward dactylic, probably. Williams once remarked that American speech tends toward dactylic. But it's more complicated than dactyl because dactyl is a three, three units, a foot consisting of three parts, whereas the actual rhythm is probably a rhythm which consists of five, six, or seven, like DA de de DA de de DA de de DA DA. Which is more toward the line of Greek dance rhythms—that's why they call them choriambic. So actually, probably it's not really technically correct, what she said. But—and that applies to certain poems, like certain passages of *Howl* and certain passages of *Kaddish*—there are definite rhythms which could be analyzed as corresponding to classical rhythms, though not necessarily *English* classical rhythms; they might correspond to Greek classical rhythms, or Sanskrit prosody. But probably most of the other poetry, like *Aether* or *Laughing Gas* or a lot of those poems, they simply don't fit into that. I think she felt very comfy, to think that that would be so. I really felt quite hurt about that, because it seemed to me that she ignored the main prosodic technical achievements that I had proffered forth to the academy, and they didn't even recognize it. I mean not that I want to stick her with being the academy.

INTERVIEWER

And in *Howl* and *Kaddish* you were working with a kind of classical unit? Is that an accurate description?

GINSBERG

Yeah, but it doesn't do very much good, because I wasn't really working with a classical unit, I was working with my own neural impulses and writing impulses. See, the difference is between someone sitting down to write a poem *in* a definite preconceived metrical pattern and filling in that pattern, and someone working with his physiological movements and *arriving* at a pattern, and perhaps even arriving at a pattern which might even have a name, or might even have a classical usage, but arriving at it organically rather than syntheti-

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cally. Nobody's got any objection to even iambic pentameter if it comes from a source deeper than the mind, that is to say if it comes from the breathing and the belly and the lungs.

INTERVIEWER

American poets have been able to break away from a kind of English specified rhythm earlier than English poets have been able to do. Do you think this has anything to do with a peculiarity in English spoken tradition?

GINSBERG

No, I don't really think so, because the English don't speak in iambic pentameter either; they don't speak in the recognizable pattern that they write in. The dimness of their speech and the lack of emotional variation is parallel to the kind of dim diction and literary usage in the poetry now. But you can hear all sorts of Liverpudlian or Gordian—that's Newcastle—you can hear all sorts of variants aside from an upper tone accent, a high class accent, that don't fit into the tone of poetry being written right now. It's not being used like in America—I think it's just that British poets are more cowardly.

INTERVIEWER

Do you find any exception to this?

GINSBERG

It's pretty general, even the supposedly avant-garde poets. They write, you know, in a very toned-down manner.

INTERVIEWER

How about a poet like Basil Bunting?

GINSBERG

Well, he was working with a whole bunch of wild men from an earlier era, who were all breaking through, I guess. And so he had that experience—also he knew Persian, he knew Persian prosody. He was better educated than most English poets.

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INTERVIEWER

The kind of organization you use in *Howl*, a recurrent kind of syntax—you don't think this is relevant any longer to what you want to do?

GINSBERG

No, but it was relevant to what I wanted to do then, it wasn't even a conscious decision.

INTERVIEWER

Was this related in any way to a kind of music or jazz that you were interested in at the time?

GINSBERG

Mmm... the myth of Lester Young as described by Kerouac, blowing 89 choruses of *Lady Be Good*, say, in one night, or my own hearing of Illinois Jacquet's *Jazz at the Philharmonic*, Volume 2; I think *Can't Get Started* was the title.

INTERVIEWER

And you've also mentioned poets like Christopher Smart, for instance, as providing an analogy—is this something you discovered later on?

GINSBERG

When I looked into it, yeah. Actually, I keep reading, or earlier I kept reading, that I was influenced by Kenneth Fearing and Carl Sandburg, whereas actually I was more conscious of Christopher Smart, and Blake's Prophetic Books, and Whitman and some aspects of Biblical rhetoric. And a lot of specific prose things like Genet, Genet's *Our Lady of the Flowers* and the rhetoric in that, and Céline; Kerouac, most of all, was the biggest influence I think—Kerouac's prose.

INTERVIEWER

When did you come onto Burroughs' work?

GINSBERG

Let's see... Well, first thing of Burroughs I ever read was 1946... which was a skit later published and integrated in

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some other work of his, called *So Proudly We Hail*, describing the sinking of the Titanic and an orchestra playing, a spade orchestra playing "The Star Spangled Banner" while everybody rushed out to the lifeboats and the captain got up in woman's dress and rushed into the purser's office and shot the purser and stole all the money, and a spastic paretic jumped into a lifeboat with a machete and began chopping off people's fingers that were trying to climb into the boat, saying, "Out of the way, you foolth... Dirty thunthufbithes." That was a thing he had written up at Harvard with a friend named Kells Elvins. Which is really the whole key of all his work, like the sinking of America, and everybody like frightened rats trying to get out, or that was his vision of the time.

Then he and Kerouac later in 1945, '45 or '46, wrote a big detective book together, alternating chapters. I don't know where that book is now—Kerouac has his chapters and Burroughs' are somewhere in his papers. So I think in a sense it was Kerouac that encouraged Burroughs to write really, because Kerouac was so enthusiastic about prose, about writing, about lyricism, about the honor of writing... the Thomas Wolfe-ian delights of it. So anyway he turned Burroughs on in a *sense*, because Burroughs found a companion who could write really interestingly, and Burroughs admired Kerouac's perceptions. Kerouac could imitate Dashiell Hammett as well as Bill, which was Bill's natural style: dry, bony, factual. At that time Burroughs was reading John O'Hara, simply for facts, not for any sublime stylistic thing, just because he was a hard-nosed reporter.

Then in Mexico around 1951 he started writing *Junkie*. I've forgotten what relation I had to that—I think I wound up as the agent for it, taking it around New York trying to get it published. I think he sent me portions of it at the time—I've forgotten how it worked out now. This was around 1949 or 1950. He was going through a personal crisis, his wife had died. It was in Mexico or South America... but it was a very generous thing of him to do, to start writing all of a sudden. Burroughs was always a very *tender* sort of person, but very dignified and shy and withdrawn, and for him to *commit* him-

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self to a big autobiographical thing like that was... at the time, struck me as like a piece of eternity is in love with the... what is it, Eternity is in love with the productions of Time? So he was making a production of Time then.

Then I started taking that around. I've forgot who I took that to but I think maybe to Louis Simpson who was then working at Bobbs-Merrill. I'm not sure whether I took it to him—I remember taking it to Jason Epstein who was then working at Doubleday I think. Epstein at the time was not as experienced as he is now. And his reaction to it, I remember when I went back to his office to pick it up, was, well this is all very interesting, but it isn't really interesting, on account of if it were an autobiography of a junkie written by Winston *Churchill* then it'd be interesting, but written by somebody he'd never heard of, well then it's *not* interesting. And anyway I said what about the *prose*, the prose is interesting, and he says, oh, a difference of opinion on that. Finally I wound up taking it to Carl Solomon who was then a reader for A. A. Wynn Company, which was his uncle; and they finally got it through there. But it was finally published as a cheap paperback. With a whole bunch of frightened footnotes; like Burroughs said that marijuana was non-habit-forming which is now accepted as a fact, there'd be a footnote by the editor, "Reliable, er, responsible medical opinion does not confirm this." Then they also had a little introduction... literally they were afraid of the book being censored or *seized* at the time, is what they said. I've forgotten what the terms of censorship or seizure were that they were worried about. This was about 1952. They *said* that they were afraid to publish it straight for fear there would be a Congressional investigation or something, I don't know what. I think there was some noise about narcotics at the time. Newspaper noise ... I've forgotten exactly what the arguments were. But anyway they had to write a preface which hedged on the book a lot.

INTERVIEWER

Has there been a time when fear of censorship or similar trouble has made your own expression difficult?

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GINSBERG

This is so complicated a matter. The beginning of the fear with me was, you know, what would my father say to something that I would write. At the time, writing *Howl*—for instance like I assumed when writing it that it was something that *could* not be published because I wouldn't want my daddy to see what was in there. About my sex life, being fucked in the ass, imagine your father reading a thing like that, was what I thought. Though that disappeared as soon as the thing was real, or as soon as I manifested my... you know, it didn't make that much importance finally. That was sort of a help for writing, because I assumed that it wouldn't be published, therefore I could say anything that I wanted. So literally just for myself or anybody that I knew personally well, writers who would be willing to appreciate it with a breadth of tolerance—in a piece of work like *Howl*. Who wouldn't be judging from a moralistic viewpoint but looking for evidences of humanity or secret thought or just actual truthfulness.

Then there's later the problem of publication—we had a lot. The English printer refused at first I think, we were afraid of customs; the first edition we had to print with asterisks on some of the dirty words, and then the *Evergreen Review* in reprinting it used asterisks, and various people reprinting it later always wanted to use the Evergreen version rather than the corrected legal City Lights version—like I think there's an anthology of Jewish writers, I forgot who edited that, but a couple of the high-class intellectuals from Columbia. I had written asking them specifically to use the later City Lights version, but they went ahead and printed an asterisked version. I forget what was the name of that—something like *New Generation of Jewish Writing*, Philip Roth, etc.

INTERVIEWER

Do you take difficulties like these as social problems, problems of communication simply, or do you feel they also block your own ability to express yourself for yourself?

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GINSBERG

The problem is, where it gets to literature, is this. We all talk among ourselves and we have common understandings, and we say anything we want to say, and we talk about our assholes, and we talk about our cocks, and we talk about who we fucked last night, or who we're gonna fuck tomorrow, or what kinda love affair we have, or when we got drunk, or when we stuck a broom in our ass in the Hotel Ambassador in Prague—anybody tells one's friends about that. So then—what happens if you make a distinction between what you tell your friends and what you tell your Muse? The problem is to break down that distinction: when you approach the Muse to talk as frankly as you would talk with yourself or with your friends. So I began finding, in conversations with Burroughs and Kerouac and Gregory Corso, in conversations with people whom I knew well, whose souls I respected, that the things we were telling each other for real were totally different from what was already in literature. And that was Kerouac's great discovery in *On The Road*. The kinds of things that he and Neal Cassidy were talking about, he finally discovered were *the* subject matter for what he wanted to write down. That meant, at that minute, a complete revision of what literature was supposed to be, in *his* mind, and actually in the minds of the people that first read the book. Certainly in the minds of the critics, who had at first attacked it as not being... proper structure, or something. In other words, a gang of friends running around in an automobile. Which obviously is like a great picaresque literary device, and a classical one. And was *not* recognized, at the time, as suitable literary subject matter.

INTERVIEWER

So it's not just a matter of themes—sex, or any other one...

GINSBERG

It's the ability to commit to writing, to *write*, the same way that you... are! Anyway! You have many writers who have preconceived ideas about what literature is supposed to

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be, and their ideas seem to exclude that which makes them most charming in private conversation. Their faggishness, or their campiness, or their neurasthenia, or their solitude, or their goofiness, or their—even—masculinity, at times. Because they think that they're gonna write something that sounds like something else that they've read before, instead of sounds like them. Or comes from their own life. In other words, there's no distinction, there should be no distinction between what we write down, and what we really know, to begin with. As we know it every day, with each other. And the hypocrisy of literature has been—you know like there's supposed to be formal literature, which is supposed to be different from... in subject, in diction and even in organization, from our quotidian inspired lives.

It's also like in Whitman, "I find no fat sweeter than that which sticks to my own bones," that is to say the self-confidence of someone who knows that he's really alive, and that his existence is just as good as any other subject matter.

INTERVIEWER

Is physiology a part of this too—like the difference between your long breath line, and William Carlos Williams' shorter unit?

GINSBERG

Analytically, *ex post facto*, it all begins with fucking around and intuition and without any idea of *what* you're doing, I think. Later, I have a tendency to explain it, "Well, I got a longer breath than Williams, or I'm Jewish, or I study yoga, or I sing long lines..." But anyway, what it boils down to is this, it's my *movement*, my feeling is for a big long clanky statement—partly that's something that I share, or maybe that I even got from Kerouac's long prose line; which is really, like he once remarked, an extended poem. Like one long sentence page of his in *Doctor Sax* or *Railroad Earth* or occasionally *On the Road*—if you examine them phrase by phrase they usually have the density of poetry, and the beauty

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of poetry, but most of all the single elastic rhythm running from beginning to end of the line and ending "mop!"

INTERVIEWER

Have you ever wanted to extend this rhythmic feeling as far as say Artaud or now Michael McClure have taken it—to a line that is actually animal noise?

GINSBERG

The rhythm of the long line is also an animal cry.

INTERVIEWER

So you're following that feeling and not a thought or a visual image?

GINSBERG

It's simultaneous. The poetry generally is like a rhythmic articulation of feeling. The feeling is like an impulse that rises within—just like sexual impulses, say; it's almost as definite as that. It's a feeling that begins somewhere in the pit of the stomach and rises up forward in the breast and then comes out through the mouth and ears, and comes forth a croon or a groan or a sigh. Which, if you put words to it by looking around and seeing and trying to describe what's making you sigh—and sigh in words—you simply articulate what you're feeling. As simple as that. Or actually what happens is, at best what happens, is there's a definite body rhythm that has no definite words, or may have one or two words attached to it, one or two key words attached to it. And then, in writing it down, it's simply by a process of association that I find what the rest of the statement is—what can be collected around that word, what that word is connected to. Partly by simple association, the first thing that comes to my mind like "Moloch is" or "Moloch who," and then whatever comes out. But that also goes along with a definite rhythmic impulse, like DA de de DA de de DA de de DA DA. "*Mo*loch whose *eyes* are a *thou*sand blind *windows*." And before I wrote "Moloch whose eyes are a thousand blind windows," I had

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the word, "Moloch, Moloch, Moloch," and I also had the feeling DA de de DA de de DA de de DA DA. So it was just a question of looking up and seeing a lot of windows, and saying, oh, windows, of course, but what kind of windows? But not even that—"Moloch whose eyes." "Moloch whose *eyes*"—which is beautiful in itself—but what about it, Moloch whose eyes are *what*? So Moloch whose eyes—then probably the next thing I thought was "thousands." O.K., and then thousands *what*? "Thousands blind." And I had to finish it somehow. So I hadda say "windows." It looked good *afterward*.

Usually during the composition, step by step, word by word and adjective by adjective, if it's at all spontaneous, I don't know whether it even makes sense sometimes. Sometimes I do know it makes complete sense, and I start crying. Because I realize I'm hitting some area which is absolutely true. And in that sense applicable universally, or understandable universally. In that sense able to survive through time—in that sense to be read by somebody and wept to, maybe, centuries later. In that sense prophecy, because it touches a common key... what prophecy actually is is not that you actually know that the bomb will fall in 1942. It's that you know and feel something which somebody knows and feels in a hundred years. And maybe articulate it in a hint—concrete way that they can pick up on in a hundred years.

INTERVIEWER

You once mentioned something you had found in Cézanne —a remark about the reconstitution of the *petites sensations* of experience, in his own painting—and you compared this with the method of your poetry.

GINSBERG

I got all hung up on Cézanne around 1949 in my last year at Columbia, studying with Meyer Schapiro. I don't know how it led into it—I think it was about the same time that I was having these Blake visions. So. The thing I understood

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from Blake was that it was possible to transmit a message through time which could reach the enlightened, that poetry had a definite effect, it wasn't just pretty, or just beautiful, as I had understood pretty beauty before—it was something basic to human existence, or it reached something, it reached the bottom of human existence. But anyway the impression I got was that it was like a kind of time machine through which he could transmit, Blake could transmit, his basic consciousness and communicate it to somebody else after he was dead, in other words build a time machine.

Now just about that time I was looking at Cézanne and I suddenly got a strange shuddering impression looking at his canvases, partly the effect when someone pulls a venetian blind, reverses the venetian—there's a sudden shift, a flashing that you see in Cézanne canvases. Partly it's when the canvas opens up into three dimensions and looks like wooden objects, like solid space objects, in three dimensions rather than flat. Partly it's the enormous spaces which open up in Cézanne's landscapes. And it's partly that mysterious quality around his figures, like of his wife or the card players or the postman or whoever, the local Aix characters. They look like great huge 3-D wooden dolls, sometimes. Very *uncanny* thing, like a very mysterious thing, in other words there's a strange sensation that one gets, looking at his canvases, which I began to associate with the extraordinary sensation—cosmic sensation, in fact—that I had experienced catalyzed by Blake's *Sunflower* and *Sick Rose* and a few other poems. So I began studiously investigating Cézanne's intentions and method, and looking at all the canvases of his that I could find in New York, and all the reproductions I could find, and I was writing at the time a paper on him, for Schapiro at Columbia in the Fine Arts course.

And the whole thing opened up, two ways: first, I read a book on Cézanne's composition by Earl Loran, who showed photographs, analyses and photographs of the original motifs, side by side with the actual canvases—and years later I actually went to Aix, with all the postcards, and stood in the spots, and tried to find the places where he painted Mont Ste.

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Victoire from, and got in his studio and saw some of the motifs he used like his big black hat and his cloak. Well, first of all I began to see that Cézanne had all sorts of literary symbolism in him, on and off. I was preoccupied with Plotinian terminology, of time and eternity, and I saw it in Cézanne paintings, an early painting of a clock on a shelf which I associated with time and eternity, and I began to think he was a big secret mystic. And I saw a photograph of his studio in Loran's book and it was like an alchemist's studio, because he had a skull, and he had a long black coat, and he had this big black hat. So I began thinking of him as you know like a magic character. Like the original version I had thought of him was like this austere dullard from Aix. So I began getting really interested in him as a hermetic type, and then I symbolically read into his canvases things that probably weren't there, like there's a painting of a winding road which turns off, and I saw that as the mystical path: it turns off into a village and the end of the path is hidden. Something he painted I guess when he went out painting with Bernard. Then there was an account of a very fantastic conversation that he had had. It's quoted in Loran's book: there's a long long long paragraph where he says, "by means of squares, cubes, triangles, I try to reconstitute the impression that I have from nature: the means that I use to reconstitute the impression of solidity that I think-feel-see when I am looking at a motif like Victoire, is to reduce it to some kind of pictorial language, so I use these squares, cubes and triangles, but I try to build them together so interknit"—*and here in the conversation he held his hands together with his fingers interknit*—"so that *no light gets through.*" And I was mystified by that, but it seemed to make sense in terms of the grid of paint strokes that he had on his canvas, so that he produced a solid two-dimensional surface which when you looked *in*to it, maybe from a slight distance with your eyes either unfocused or your eyelids lowered slightly, you could see a great three-dimensional opening, mysterious, stereoscopic, like going into a stereopticon. And I began discovering in *The Card Players* all sorts of sinister symbols, like there's one guy leaning against the wall

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with a stolid expression on his face, that he doesn't want to get involved; and then there's two guys who are peasants, who are looking as if they've just been dealt *Death* cards; and then the *dealer* you look at and he turns out to be a city slicker with a big blue cloak and almost rouge doll-like cheeks and a fat-faced Kafkian-agent impression about him, like he's a card sharp, he's a cosmic card sharp dealing out Fate to all these people. This looks like a great big hermetic Rembrandtian portrait in Aix! That's why it has that funny monumentality—aside from the quote plastic values unquote.

Then, I smoked a lot of marijuana and went to the basement of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and looked at his water colors and that's where I began really turning on to space in Cézanne and the way he built it up. Particularly there's one of rocks, I guess *Rocks at Garonne*, and you look at them for a while, and after a while they seem like they're rocks, just the rock parts, you don't know where they are, whether they're on the ground or in the air or on top of a cliff, but then they seem to be floating in space like clouds, and then they seem to be also a bit like they're amorphous, like kneecaps or cockheads or faces without eyes. And it has a very mysterious impression. Well, that may have been the result of the pot. But it's a definite thing that I got from that. Then he did some very odd studies after classical statues, Renaissance statues, and they're great gigantesque herculean figures with little tiny pin-heads... so that apparently was his comment on them!

And then... the things were endless to find in Cézanne. Finally I was reading his letters and I discovered this phrase again, *mes petites sensations*—"I'm an old man and my passions are not, my senses are not coarsened by passions like some *other* old men I know, and I have worked for years trying to," I guess it was the phrase, "*reconstitute* the *petites sensations* that I get from nature, and I could stand on a hill and merely by moving my head half an inch the composition of the landscape was totally changed." So apparently he'd refined his optical perception to such a point where it's a real contemplation of optical phenomena in an almost yogic way, where he's stand-

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ing there, from a specific point studying the optical field, the depth in the optical field, looking, actually looking at his own eyeballs in a sense. The attempting to reconstitute the sensation in his own eyeballs. And what does he say finally—in a very weird statement which one would not expect of the austere old workman, he said, "And this *petite sensation* is nothing other than *pater omnipotens aeterna deus*."

So that was I felt the key to Cézanne's hermetic method... everybody knows his workmanlike, artisanlike, pettified-like painting method which is so great, but the really ro*man*ticistic motif behind it is absolutely marvelous, so you realize that he's really a saint! Working on his form of yoga, all that time, in obvious saintly circumstances of retirement in a small village, leading a relatively non-sociable life, going through the motions of going to church or not, but really containing in his skull these supernatural phenomena, and observations... you know, and it's very humble actually, because he didn't know if he was crazy or not—that is a flash of the physical, miracle dimensions of existence, trying to reduce that to canvas in two dimensions, and then trying to do it in such a way as it would look if the observer looked at it long enough it would look like as much three dimension as the actual *world* of optical phenomena when one looks through one's eyes. Actually he's *re*-constituted the whole fucking universe in his canvases—it's like a fantastic thing!—or at least the appearance of the universe.

So. I used a lot of this material in the references in the last part of the first section of *Howl*: "sensation of Pater Omnipotens Aeterna Deus." The last part of *Howl* was really an homage to art but also in specific terms an homage to Cézanne's method, in a sense I adapted what I could to writing; but that's a very complicated matter to explain. Except, putting it very simply, that just as Cézanne doesn't use perspective lines to create space, but it's a juxtaposition of one color against another color (that's one element of his space), so, I had the idea, perhaps over-refined, that by the unexplainable, unexplained non-perspective line, that is, juxtaposition of one *word* against another, a *gap* between the two words—like the

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space gap in the canvas—there'd be a gap between the two words which the mind would fill in with the sensation of existence. In other words when I say, oh... when Shakespeare says, "In the dread vast and middle of the night," something happens between "dread vast" and "middle." That creates like a whole space of, spaciness of black night. How it gets that is very odd, those words put together. Or in the haiku, you have two distinct images, set side by side without drawing a connection, without drawing a logical connection between them: the *mind* fills in this... this space. Like

O ant
crawl up Mount Fujiyama,
but slowly, slowly.

Now you have the small ant and you have Mount Fujiyama and you have the slowly, slowly, and what happens is that you feel almost like... a cock in your mouth! You feel this enormous space-universe, it's almost a tactile thing. Well anyway, it's a phenomenon-sensation, phenomenon hyphen sensation, that's created by this little haiku of Issa, for instance.

So, I was trying to do similar things with juxtapositions like "hydrogen jukebox." Or... "winter midnight smalltown streetlight rain." Instead of cubes and squares and triangles. Cézanne is reconstituting by means of triangles, cubes and colors—I have to reconstitute by means of words, rhythms of course, and all that—but say it's words, phrasings. So. The problem is then to reach the different parts of the mind, which are existing simultaneously, the different associations which are going on simultaneously, choosing elements from both, like: jazz, jukebox and all that, and we have the jukebox from that; politics, hydrogen bomb, and we have the hydrogen of that, you see "hydrogen jukebox." And that actually compresses in one instant like a whole series of things. Or the end of *Sunflower* with "cunts of wheelbarrows," whatever that all meant, or "rubber dollar bills"—"skin of machinery"; see, and actually in the moment of composition I don't necessarily *know* what it means, but it comes to mean something later, after a year or two, I realize that it meant something

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clear, unconsciously. Which takes on meaning in time, like a photograph developing slowly. Because we're not really always conscious of the entire depth of our minds, in other words we just know a lot more than we're able to be aware of, normally—though at moments we're completely aware I guess.

There's some other element of Cézanne that was interesting... oh, his patience, of course. In recording the optical phenomena. Has something to do with Blake: *with* not *through* the eye—"You're led to believe a lie when you see with not through the eye." He's seeing through his eye. One can see *through* his canvas to God, really, is the way it boils down. Or to Pater Omnipotens Aeterna Deus. I could imagine someone not prepared, in a peculiar chemical physiological state, peculiar mental state, psychic state, someone not prepared who had no experience of eternal ecstasy, passing in front of a Cézanne canvas, distracted and without noticing it his eye traveling in, to, through the canvas into the space and suddenly stopping with his hair standing on end, dead in his tracks *see*ing a whole universe. And I think that's what Cézanne really does, to a lot of people.

Where were we now. Yeah, the idea that I had was that gaps in space and time through images juxtaposed, just as in the haiku you get two images which the mind connects in a flash, and so that *flash* is the *petite sensation*; or the satori, perhaps, that the Zen haikuists would speak of—if they speak of it like that. So, the poetic experience that Housman talks about, the hair standing on end or the hackles rising whatever it is, visceral thing. The interesting thing would be to know if certain combinations of words and rhythms actually had an electro-chemical reaction on the body, which could catalyze specific states of consciousness. I think that's what probably happened to me with Blake. I'm *sure* it's what happens on a perhaps lower level with Poe's *Bells* or *Raven*, or even Vachel Lindsay's *Congo*: that there is a hypnotic rhythm there, which when you introduce it into your nervous system, causes all sorts of electronic changes—permanently alters it. There's a statement by Artaud on that subject, that certain music when

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introduced into the nervous system changes the molecular composition of the nerve cells or something like that, it permanently alters the being that has experience of this. Well, anyway, this is certainly true. In other words any experience we have is recorded in the brain and goes through neural patterns and whatnot: so I suppose brain recordings are done by means of shifting around of little electrons—so there is actually an electrochemical effect caused by art.

So... the problem is what is the maximum electrochemical effect in the desired direction. That is what I was taking Blake as having done to me. And what I take as one of the optimal possibilities of art. But this is all putting it in a kind of bullshit abstract way. But it's an interesting—toy. To play with. That idea.

INTERVIEWER

In the last five or six months you've been in Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Russia, and Poland. Has this helped to clarify your sense of the current world situation?

GINSBERG

Yeah, I no longer feel—I didn't ever feel that there was any answer in dogmatic Leninism-Marxism—but I feel very definitely now that there's no answer to my desires there. Nor do most of the people in those countries—in Russia or Poland or Cuba— really feel that either. It's sort of like a religious theory imposed from above and usually used to beat people on the head with. Nobody takes it seriously because it doesn't mean anything, it means different things in different countries anyway. The general idea of revolution against American idiocy is good, it's still sympathetic, and I guess it's a good thing like in Cuba, and obviously Vietnam. But what's gonna follow—the dogmatism that follows is a big drag. And everybody apologizes for the dogmatism by saying, well, it's an inevitable consequence of the struggle against American repression. And that may be true too.

But there's one thing I feel certain of, and that's that there's no human answer in communism or capitalism as it's practiced

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outside of the U.S. in any case. In other words, by hindsight the interior of America is not bad, at least for me, though it might be bad for a spade, but not too bad, creepy, but it's not impossible. But traveling in countries like Cuba and Vietnam I realize that the people that get the real evil side effects of America are there, in other words it really is like imperialism, in that sense. People in the United States all got money, they got cars, and everybody else *starves* on account of American foreign policy. Or is being bombed out, torn apart, and bleeding on the street, they get all their teeth bashed in, tear gassed, or hot pokers up their ass, things that would be, you know, considered terrible in the United States. Except for Negroes.

So I don't know. I don't see any particular answer, and *this* month it seemed to me like actually an atomic war was inevitable on account of both sides were so dogmatic, and frightened and had nowhere to go and didn't know what to do with themselves anymore except fight. Everybody too intransigent. Everybody too mean. I don't suppose it'll take place, but... Somebody has got to sit in the British Museum again like Marx and figure out a new system; a new blueprint. Another century has gone, technology has changed everything completely, so it's time for a new utopian system. Burroughs is almost working on it.

But one thing that's impressive is Blake's idea of Jerusalem, Jerusalemic Britain, which I think is *now* more and more valid. He, I guess, defined it. I'm still confused about Blake, I still haven't read him all through enough to understand what direction he was really pointing to. It seems to be the *naked human form divine*, seems to be Energy, it seems to be sexualization, or sexual liberation, which are the directions we all believe in. He also seems, however, to have some idea of imagination which I don't fully understand yet. That is it's something outside of the body, with a rejection of the body, and I don't quite understand that. A life after death even. Which I still haven't comprehended. There's a letter in the Fitzwilliam Museum, written several months before he died. He says, "My body is in turmoil and stress and decaying *but*,

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my ideas, my power of ideas and my imagination, are stronger than ever." And I find it hard to conceive of that. I think if I were lying in bed dying, with my body pained, I would just give up. I mean you know, because I don't think I could *exist* outside my body. But he apparently was able to. Williams didn't seem to be able to. In other words Williams' universe was tied up with his body. Blake's universe didn't seem to be tied up with his body. Real mysterious, like far other worlds and other seas, so to speak. Been puzzling over that today.

The Jerusalemic world of Blake seems to be Mercy-Pity-Peace. Which has human form. Mercy has a human face. So that's all clear.

INTERVIEWER

How about Blake's statement about the senses being the chief inlets of the soul in this age—I don't know what "this age" means; is there another one?

GINSBERG

What he says is interesting because there's the same thing in Hindu mythology, they speak of This Age as the Kali Yuga, the age of destruction, or an age so sunk in materialism. You'd find a similar formulation in Vico, like what is it, the Age of Gold running on to the Iron and then Stone, again. Well, the Hindus say that *this* is the Kali Age or Kali Yuga or Kali Cycle, and we are also so sunk in matter, the five senses are matter, sense, that they say there is absolutely no way out by intellect, by thought, by discipline, by practice, by sadhana, by jnana yoga, nor karma yoga, that is doing good works, no way out thru our own will or our own effort. The *only* way out that they generally now prescribe, generally in India at the moment, is through Bhakti yoga, which is Faith-Hope-Adoration-Worship, or like probably the equivalent of the Christian Sacred Heart, which I find a very lovely doctrine—that is to say, pure delight, the only way you can be saved is to sing. In other words, the only way to drag up, from the depths of this depression, to drag up your soul to its proper

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bliss, and understanding, is to give yourself, completely, to your heart's desire. The image will be determined by the heart's compass, by the compass of what the heart moves toward and desires. And then you get on your knees or on your lap or on your head and you sing and chant prayers and mantras, till you reach a state of ecstasy and understanding, and the bliss overflows out of your body. They say intellect, like Saint Thomas Aquinas, will never do it, because it's just like me getting all hung up on whether I could remember what happened before I was born—I mean you could get lost there very easily, and it has no relevance *anyway*, to the existent flower. Blake says something similar, like Energy, and Excess... leads to the palace of wisdom. The Hindu Bhakti is like excess of devotion; you just, you know, give yourself all out to devotion.

Very oddly a lady saint Shri Matakrishnaji in Brindaban, whom I consulted about my spiritual problems, told me to take Blake for my guru. There's all kinds of different gurus, there can be living and non-living gurus—apparently whoever initiates you, and I apparently was initiated by Blake in terms of at least having an ecstatic experience from him. So that when I got here to Cambridge I had to rush over to the Fitzwilliam Museum to find his misspellings in *Songs of Innocence*.

INTERVIEWER

What was the Blake experience you speak of?

GINSBERG

About 1945 I got interested in supreme reality with a capital S and R, and I wrote big long poems about a last voyage looking for Supreme Reality. Which was like a Dostoevskian or Thomas-Wolfe-ian idealization or like Rimbaud—what was Rimbaud's term, new vision, was that it? Or Kerouac was talking about a new vision, verbally, and intuitively out of longing, but also out of a funny kind of tolerance of this universe. In 1948 in East Harlem in the summer I was living—this is like the Ancient Mariner, I've said this so many times:

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"stoppeth one of three/ 'By thy long grey beard'..." Hang an albatross around your neck... The one thing I felt at the time was that it would be a terrible horror, that in one or two decades I would be trying to explain to people that one day something like this happened to me! I even wrote a long poem saying, "I will grow old, a grey and groaning man,/ and with each hour the same thought, and with each thought the same denial./ Will I spend my life in praise of the *idea* of God?/ Time leaves no hope. We creep and wait. We wait and go alone." Psalm II—which I never published. So anyway—there I was in my bed in Harlem... jacking off. With my pants open, lying around on a bed by the windowsill, looking out into the cornices of Harlem and the sky above. And I had just come. And had perhaps hardly even wiped the come off my thighs, my trousers or whatever it was. As I often do, I had been jacking off while reading—I think it's probably a common phenomenon to be noticed among adolescents. Though I was a little older than an adolescent at the time. About 22. There's a kind of interesting thing about, you know, distracting your attention while you jack off, that is, you know, reading a book or looking out of a window, or doing something else with the conscious mind which kind of makes it sexier.

So anyway, what I had been doing that week—I'd been in a very lonely solitary state, dark night of the soul sort of, reading St. John of the Cross, maybe on account of that everybody'd gone away that I knew, Burroughs was in Mexico, Jack was out in Long Island and relatively isolated, we didn't see each other, and I had been very close with them for several years. Huncke I think was in jail, or something. Anyway, there was nobody I knew. Mainly the thing was that I'd been making it with N.C., and finally I think I got a letter from him saying it was all off, no more, we shouldn't consider ourselves lovers any more on account of it just wouldn't work out. But previously we'd had an understanding that we—Neal Cassidy, I said N.C. but I suppose you can use his name—we'd had a big tender lovers' understanding. But I guess it got too much for him, partly because he was 3000 miles

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away and he had 6000 girl friends on the other side of the continent, who were keeping him busy, and then here was my lone cry of despair from New York. So. I got a letter from him saying, Now, Allen, we gotta move on to *new* territory. So I felt this is like a great mortal blow to all of my tenderest hopes. And I figured I'd never find any sort of psycho-spiritual sexo-cock jewel fulfillment in my existence! So, I went into... like I felt cut off from what I'd idealized romantically. And I was also graduating from school and had nowhere to go and the difficulty of getting a job. So finally there was nothing for me to do except to eat vegetables and live in Harlem. In an apartment I'd rented from someone. Sublet.

So, in that state therefore, of hopelessness, or dead end, change of phase you know—growing up—and in an equilibrium in any case, a psychic, a mental equilibrium of a kind, like of having no New Vision and no Supreme Reality and nothing but the world in front of me, and of not knowing what to do with *that*... there was a funny balance of tension, in every direction. And just after I came, on this occasion, with a Blake book on my lap—I wasn't even reading, my eye was idling over the page of *The Sunflower*, and it suddenly appeared—the poem I'd read a lot of times before, overfamiliar to the point where it didn't make any particular meaning except some sweet thing about flowers—and suddenly I realized that the poem was talking about *me*. "Ah, Sunflower! weary of time, / Who countest the steps of the Sun; / Seeking that sweet golden clime, / Where the traveller's journey is done." Now, I began understanding it, the poem while looking at it, and suddenly, simultaneously with understanding it, heard a very deep earthen grave voice in the room, which I immediately assumed, I didn't think twice, was Blake's voice; it wasn't any voice that I knew, though I had previously had a conception of a voice of rock, in a poem, some image like that—or maybe that came after this experience.

And my eye on the page, simultaneously the auditory hallucination, or whatever terminology here used, the appari-

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tional voice, in the room, woke me further deep in my understanding of the poem, because the voice was so completely tender and beautifully... ancient. Like the voice of the Ancient of Days. But the peculiar quality of the voice was something unforgettable because it was like God had a human voice, with all the infinite tenderness and anciency and mortal gravity of a living Creator speaking to his son. "Where the youth pined away with desire, / And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow / Arise from their graves, and aspire / Where my Sun-flower wishes to go." Meaning that there *was* a *place*, there was a sweet golden clime, and the *sweet golden*, what was that... and simultaneous to the voice there was also an emotion, risen in my soul in response to the voice, and a sudden *visual* realization of the same awesome phenomena. That is to say, looking out at the window, through the window at the sky, suddenly it seemed that I saw into the depths of the universe, by looking simply into the ancient sky. The sky suddenly seemed very *ancient*. And this was the very ancient place that he was talking about, the sweet golden clime, I suddenly realized that *this* existence was *it*! And, that I was born in order to experience up to this very moment that I was having this experience, to realize what this was all about —in other words that this was the moment that I was born for. This initiation. Or this vision or this consciousness, of being alive unto myself, alive myself unto the Creator. As the son of the Creator—who loved me, I realized, or who responded to my desire, say. It was the same desire both ways.

Anyway my first thought was this was what I was born for, and second thought, never forget—never forget, never renig, never deny. Never deny the voice—no, never *forget* it, don't get lost mentally wandering in other spirit worlds or American or job worlds or advertising worlds or war worlds or earth worlds. But the spirit of the universe was what I was born to realize. What I was speaking about visually was, immediately, that the cornices in the old tenement building in Harlem across the back yard court had been carved very finely in 1890 or 1910. And were like the solidification of a great

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deal of intelligence and care and love also. So that I began noticing in every corner where I looked evidences of a living hand, even in the bricks, in the arrangement of each brick. Some hand placed them there—that some hand had placed the whole universe in front of me. That some hand had placed the sky. No, that's exaggerating—not that some hand had placed the sky but that the sky was the living blue hand itself. Or that God was in front of my eyes—existence itself was God. Well the formulations are like that—I didn't formulate it in exactly those terms, what I was seeing was a visionary thing, it was a lightness in my body... my body suddenly felt *light*, and a sense of cosmic consciousness, vibrations, understanding, awe, and wonder and surprise. And it was a sudden awakening into a totally deeper real universe than I'd been existing in. So, I'm trying to avoid generalizations about that sudden deeper real universe and keep it strictly to observations of phenomenal data, or a voice with a certain sound, the appearance of cornices, the appearance of the sky say, of the great blue hand, the living hand—to keep to images.

But anyway—the same... *petite sensation* recurred several minutes later, with the same voice, while reading the poem *The Sick Rose*. This time it was a slightly different sense-depth-mystic impression. Because *The Sick Rose*—you know I can't interpret the poem now, but it had a meaning—I mean I can interpret it on a verbal level, the sick rose is my self, or self, or the living body, sick because the mind, which is the worm "that flies in the night, in the howling storm," or Urizen, reason; Blake's character might be the one that's entered the body and is destroying it, or let us say death, the worm as being death, the natural process of death, some kind of mystical being of its own trying to come in and devour the body, the rose. Blake's drawing for it is complicated, it's a big drooping rose, drooping because it's dying, and there's a worm in it, and the worm is wrapped around a little sprite that's trying to get out of the mouth of the rose.

But anyway, I experienced *The Sick Rose*, with the voice of Blake reading it, as something that applied to the whole universe, like hearing the doom of the whole universe, and

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at the same time the inevitable beauty of doom. I can't remember now, except it was very beautiful and very awesome. But a little of it slightly scary, having to do with the knowledge of death—my death and also the death of being itself, and that was the great pain. So, like a prophecy, not only in human terms but a prophecy as if Blake had penetrated the very secret core of the *entire* universe and had come forth with some little magic formula statement in rhyme and rhythm that, if properly heard in the inner inner ear, would deliver you beyond the universe.

So then, the other poem that brought this on in the same day was *The Little Girl Lost*, where there was a repeated refrain,

> Do father, mother, *weep*,
> Where can Lyca *sleep*?
>
> How can Lyca *sleep*
> If her mother *weep*?
>
> 'If her heart does *ache*
> Then let Lyca *wake*;
> If my mother *sleep*,
> Lyca shall not *weep*.'

It's that hypnotic thing—and I suddenly realized that Lyca was me, or Lyca was the self; father, mother seeking Lyca, was God seeking, Father, the Creator; and "If her heart does ache / Then let Lyca wake"—wake to what? *Wake* meaning wake to the same awakeness I was just talking about—of existence in the entire universe. The total consciousness then, of the complete universe. Which is what Blake was talking about. In other words a breakthrough from ordinary habitual quotidian consciousness into consciousness that was really seeing all of heaven in a flower. Or what was it, eternity in a flower... heaven in a grain of sand. As I was seeing heaven in the cornice of the building. By heaven here I mean this imprint or concretization or living form, of an intelligent

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hand—the work of an intelligent hand, which still had the intelligence molded into it. The gargoyles on the Harlem cornices. What was interesting about the cornice was that there's cornices like that on every building, but I never noticed them before. And I never realized that they meant spiritual labor, to anyone—that somebody had labored to make a curve in a piece of tin—to make a cornucopia out of a piece of industrial tin. Not only that man, the workman, the artisan, but the architect had thought of it, the builder had paid for it, the smelter had *smelt* it, the miner had dug it up out of the earth, the earth had gone through eons preparing it. So the little molecules had slumbered for... for kalpas. So out of *all* of these kalpas it all got together in a great succession of impulses, to be frozen finally in that one form of a cornucopia cornice on the building front. And God knows how many people made the moon. Or what spirits labored... to set fire to the sun. As Blake says, "When I look in the sun I don't see the rising sun I see a band of angels singing holy, holy, holy." Well his perception of the field of the sun is different from that of a man who just sees the sun sun, without any emotional relationship to it.

But then, there was a point later in the week when the intermittent flashes of the same... bliss—because the experience was quite blissful—came back. In a sense all this is described in *The Lion for Real* by anecdotes of different experiences—actually it was a very difficult time, which I won't go into here. Because suddenly I thought, also simultaneously, ooh I'm going *mad*! That's described in the line in *Howl*, "who thought they were *only* mad when Baltimore gleamed in supernatural ecstasy"—"who thought they were *only* mad..." If it were only that easy! In other words it'd be a lot easier if you just were crazy, instead of—then you could chalk it up, "well I'm nutty"—but on the other hand what if it's all true and you're *born* into this great cosmic universe in which you're a spirit angel—terrible fucking situation to be confronted with. It's like being woken up one morning by Joseph K's captors. Actually what I think I did was there was a couple of girls living next door and I crawled out on the fire

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escape and tapped on their window and said, "I've seen God!" and they *banged* the window shut. Oh, what tales I could have told them if they'd let me in! Because I was in a very exalted state of mind and the consciousness was still with me—I remember I immediately rushed to Plato and read some great image in the *Phaedrus* about horses flying through the sky, and rushed over to St. John and started reading fragments of *con un no saber sabiendo... que me quede balbuciendo*, and rushed to the other part of the bookshelf and picked up Plotinus about The Alone—the Plotinus I found more difficult to interpret.

But I *immediately* doubled my thinking process, quadrupled, and I was able to read almost any text and see all sorts of divine significance in it. And I think that week or that month I had to take an examination in John Stuart Mill. And instead of writing about his ideas I got completely hung up on his experience of reading—was it Wordsworth? Apparently the thing that got him back was an experience of nature that he received keyed off by reading Wordsworth, on "sense sublime" or something. That's a very good description, that sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused, whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, and the round ocean, and the... the *living* air, did he say? The living air—see just that hand again—*and* in the heart of man. So I think this experience is characteristic of all high poetry. I mean that's the way I began seeing poetry as the communication of the particular experience—not just any experience but *this* experience.

INTERVIEWER

Have you had anything like this experience again?

GINSBERG

Yeah... I'm not finished with this period. Then, in my room, I didn't know what to do. But I wanted to bring it up, so I began experimenting with it, without Blake. And I think it was one day in my kitchen, I had an old-fashioned kitchen with a sink with a tub in it with a board over the top, I started moving around and sort of shake with my body and

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dancing up and down on the floor and saying "Dance! dance! dance! dance! spirit! spirit! spirit! dance!" and suddenly I felt like *Faust*, calling up the devil. And then it started coming over me, this big... creepy feeling, cryptozoid or monozoidal, so I got all scared and quit.

Then, I was walking around Columbia and I went in the Columbia bookstore and was reading Blake again, leafing over a book of Blake, I think it was *The Human Abstract*: "Pity would be no more..." And suddenly it came over me in the bookstore again, and I was in the eternal place *once more*, and I looked around at everybody's faces, and I saw all these wild animals! Because there was a bookstore clerk there who I hadn't paid much attention to, he was just a familiar fixture in the bookstore scene and everybody went in the bookstore every day like me, because downstairs there was a café and upstairs there were all these clerks that we were all familiar with—this guy had a very *long* face, you know some people look like giraffes. So he looked kind of giraffish. He had a kind of a long face with a long nose. I don't know what kind of sex life he had, but he must have had something. But anyway I looked in his face and I suddenly saw like a great tormented soul—and he had just been somebody whom I'd regarded as perhaps a not particularly beautiful or sexy character, or lovely face, but you know someone familiar, and perhaps a pleading cousin in the universe. But all of a sudden I realized that *he* knew also, just like I knew. And that everybody in the bookstore knew, and that they were all hiding it! They all had the consciousness, it was like a great *un*conscious that was running between all of us that everybody *was* completely conscious, but that the fixed expressions that people have, the habitual expressions, the manners, the mode of talk, are all masks hiding this consciousness. Because almost at that moment it seemed that it would be too terrible if we communicated to each other on a level of total consciousness and awareness each of the other—like it would be too terrible, it would be the end of the bookstore, it would be the end of civ... not civilization, but in other words the position that everybody was in was *ridiculous*, everybody running around

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peddling books to each other. Here in the universe! Passing money over the counter, wrapping books in bags and guarding the door, you know, stealing books, and the people sitting up making accountings on the upper floor there, and people worrying about their exams walking through the bookstore, and all the millions of thoughts the people had you know, that I'm worrying about, whether they're going to get laid or whether anybody loves them, about their mothers dying of cancer or you know the complete death awareness that everybody has continuously with them all the time—all of a sudden revealed to me at once in the faces of the people, and they all looked like horrible grotesque masks, grotesque because *hiding* the knowledge from each other. Having a habitual conduct and forms to prescribe, forms to fulfill. Roles to play. But the main insight I had at that time was that everybody knew. Everybody knew completely everything. Knew completely everything in the terms which I was talking about.

INTERVIEWER

Do you still think they know?

GINSBERG

I'm more sure of it now. Sure. All you have to do is try and make somebody. You realize that they knew all along you were trying to make them. But until that moment you never break through to communication on the subject.

INTERVIEWER

Why not?

GINSBERG

Well, fear of rejection. The twisted faces of all those people, the faces were twisted by rejection. And hatred of self, finally. The internalization of that rejection. And finally disbelief in that shining self. Disbelief in that infinite self. Partly because the particular... partly because the *awareness* that we all carry is too often painful, because the experience of rejection and lacklove and cold war—I mean the whole cold war is the imposition of a vast mental barrier on everybody, a vast

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anti-natural psyche. A hardening, a shutting off of the perception of desire and tenderness which everybody *knows* and which is the very structure of... the atom! Structure of the human body and organism. That desire built in. Blocked. "Where the youth pined away with desire, the Virgin shrouded in snow." Or as Blake says, "On every face I see, I meet / marks of weakness, marks of woe." So what I was thinking in the bookstore was the marks of weakness, marks of woe. Which you can just look around and look at anybody's face right next to you now always—you can see it in the way the mouth is pursed, you can see it in the way the eyes blink, you can see it in the way the gaze is fixed down at the matches. It's the self-consciousness which is a substitute for communication with the outside. This consciousness pushed back into the self and thinking of how it will hold its face and eyes and hands in order to make a mask to hide the flow that is going on. Which it's aware of, which everybody is aware of really! So let's say, shyness. Fear. Fear of like total feeling, really, total being, is what it is.

So the problem then was, having attained realization, how to safely manifest it and communicate it. Of course there was the old Zen thing, when the sixth patriarch handed down the little symbolic oddments and ornaments and books and bowls, stained bowls too... when the *fifth* patriarch handed them down to the sixth patriarch he told him to hide them and don't tell anybody you're patriarch because it's dangerous, they'll kill you. So there was that immediate danger. It's taken me all these years to manifest it and work it out in a way that's materially communicable to people. Without scaring them or me. Also movements of history and breaking down the civilization. To break down everybody's masks and roles sufficiently so that everybody has to face the universe *and* the possibility of the sick rose coming true and the atom bomb. So it was an immediate Messianic thing. Which seems to be becoming more and more justified. And more and more reasonable in terms of the existence that we're living.

So. Next time it happened was about a week later walking along in the evening on a circular path around what's now I

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guess the garden or field in the middle of Columbia University, by the library. I started invoking the spirit, consciously trying to get another depth perception of cosmos. And suddenly it began occurring again, like a sort of breakthrough again, but this time—this was the last time in that period—it was the same depth of consciousness or the same cosmical awareness but suddenly it was not blissful at all but it was *frightening*. Some like real serpent-fear entering the sky. The sky was not a blue hand anymore but like a hand of death coming down on me—some really scary presence, it was almost as if I saw God again except God was the Devil. The consciousness itself was *so* vast, much more vast than any idea of it I'd had or any experience I'd had, that it was not even human any more—and was in a sense a threat, because I was going to die into that inhuman ultimately. I don't know *what* the score was there—I was too cowardly to pursue it. To attend and experience completely the Gates of Wrath—there's a poem of Blake's that deals with that, "To find a Western Path/ Right thru the Gates of Wrath." But I didn't urge my way there, I shut it all off. And got scared, and thought, I've gone too far.

INTERVIEWER

Was your use of drugs an extension of this experience?

GINSBERG

Well, since I took a vow that this was the area of, that this was my existence that I was placed into, drugs were obviously a technique for experimenting with consciousness, to get different areas and different levels and different similarities and different reverberations of the same vision. Marijuana has some of it in it, that awe, the cosmic awe that you get sometimes on pot. There are certain moments under laughing gas and aether that the consciousness does intersect with something similar—for me—to my Blake visions. The gas drugs were apparently interesting too to the Lake Poets, because there were a lot of experiments done with Sir Humphry Davy in his Pneumatic Institute. I think Coleridge and Southey and other people used to go, and De Quincey. But serious

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people. I think there hasn't been very much written about that period. *What went on* in the Humphry Davy household on Saturday midnight when Coleridge arrived by foot, through the forest, by the lakes? Then, there are certain states you get into with opium, and heroin, of almost disembodied awareness, looking down back at the earth from a place after you're dead. Well, it's not the same, but it's an interesting state, and a useful one. It's a normal state also, I mean it's a holy state of some sort. At times. Then, mainly, of course, with the hallucinogens, you get some states of consciousness which subjectively seem to be cosmic-ecstatic, or cosmic-demonic. Our version of expanded consciousness is as much as *un*conscious information—awareness comes up to the surface. Lysergic acid, peyote, mescaline, sylocidin, Ayahuasca. But I can't stand them anymore, because something happened to me with them very similar to the Blake visions. After about 30 times, 35 times, I began getting monster vibrations again. So I couldn't go any further. I may later on again, if I feel more reassurance.

However I did get a lot out of them, mainly like emotional understanding, understanding the female principle in a way—women, more sense of the softness and more desire for women. Desire for children also.

INTERVIEWER

Anything interesting about the actual experience, say with hallucinogens?

GINSBERG

What I do get is, say if I was in an apartment high on mescaline, I felt as if the apartment and myself were not merely on East Fifth Street but were in the middle of all space time. If I close my eyes on hallucinogens I get a vision of great scaly dragons in outer space, they're winding slowly and eating their own tails. Sometimes my skin and all the room seem sparkling with scales, and it's all made out of serpent stuff. And as if the whole illusion of life were made of reptile dream.

Mandala also. I use the mandala in an LSD poem. The as-

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sociations I've had during times that I was high are usually referred to or built in some image or other to one of the other poems written on drugs. Or after drugs—like in *Magic Psalm* on lysergic acid. Or mescaline. There's a long passage about a mandala in the LSD poem. There is a good situation since I was high and I was looking at a mandala—before I got high I asked the doctor that was giving it to me at Stanford to prepare me a set of mandalas to look at, to borrow some from Professor Spiegelberg who was an expert. So we had some Sikkimese elephant mandalas there. I simply describe those in the poem—what they look like while I was high.

So—summing up then—drugs were useful for exploring perception, sense perception, and exploring different possibilities and modes of consciousness, and exploring the different versions of *petites sensations*, and useful then for composing, sometimes, while under the influence. Part II of *Howl* was written under the influence of peyote, composed during peyote vision. In San Francisco—*Moloch. Kaddish* was written with amphetamine injections. An injection of amphetamine plus a little bit of morphine, plus some dexedrine later on to keep me going, because it was all in one long sitting. From a Saturday morn to a Sunday night. The amphetamine gives a peculiar metaphysical tinge to things, also. Space-outs. It doesn't interfere too much there because I wasn't habituated to it, I was just taking it that one weekend. It didn't interfere too much with the emotional charge that comes through.

INTERVIEWER

Was there any relation to this in your trip to Asia?

GINSBERG

Well, the Asian experience kind of got me out of the corner I painted myself in with drugs. That corner being an inhuman corner in the sense that I figured I was expanding my consciousness and I had to go through with it but at the same time I was confronting this serpent monster, so I was getting in a real terrible situation. It finally would get so if I'd take the drugs I'd start vomiting. But I felt that I was

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duly bound and obliged for the sake of consciousness expansion, and this insight, and breaking down my identity, and seeking more direct contact with primate sensation, nature, to continue. So when I went to India, all the way through India, I was babbling about that to all the holy men I could find. I wanted to find out if they had any suggestions. And they all did, and they were all good ones. First one I saw was Martin Buber, who was interested. In Jerusalem, Peter and I went in to see him—we called him up and made a date and had a long conversation. He had a beautiful white beard and was friendly; his nature was slightly austere but benevolent. Peter asked him what kind of visions he'd had and he described some he'd had in bed when he was younger. But he said he was *not* any longer interested in visions like that. The kind of visions he came up with were more like spiritualistic table rappings. Ghosts coming into the room thru his window, rather than big beautiful seraphic Blake angels hitting him on the head. I was thinking like loss of identity and confrontation with non-human universe as the main problem, and in a sense whether or not man had to evolve and change, and perhaps become non-human too. Melt into the universe, let us say—to put it awkwardly and inaccurately. Buber said that he was interested in man-to-man relationships, human-to-human—that he thought it was a human universe that we were destined to inhabit. And so therefore human relationships rather than relations between the human and the non-human. Which was what I was thinking that I had to go into. And he said "Mark my word, young man, in two years you will realize that I was right." He was right—in two years I marked his words. Two years is '63—I saw him in '61. I don't know if he said two years—but he said "in years to come." This was like a real terrific classical wise man's "Mark my words young man, in several years you will realize that what I said was true!" Exclamation point.

Then there was Swami Shivananda, in Rishikish in India. He said "Your own heart is your guru." Which I thought was very sweet, and very reassuring. That is the sweetness of it I felt—in my heart. And suddenly realized it was the heart

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that I was seeking. In other words it wasn't consciousness, it wasn't *petites sensations*, sensation defined as expansion of mental consciousness to include more data—as I was pursuing that line of thought, pursuing Burroughs' cut-up thing—the area that I was seeking was heart rather than mind. In other words, in mind, through mind or imagination—this is where I get confused with Blake now—in mind one can construct all sorts of universes, one can construct model universes in dream and imagination, and with lysergic acid you can enter into alternative universes and with the speed of light; and with nitrous oxide you can experience several million universes in rapid succession. You can experience a whole gamut of possibilities of universes, including the final possibility that there is none. And then you go unconscious—which is exactly what happens with gas when you go unconscious. You see that the universe is going to disappear with your consciousness, that it was all dependent on your consciousness.

Anyway a whole series of India holy men pointed back to the body—getting *in* the body rather than getting out of the human form. But living in and inhabiting the human form. Which then goes back to Blake again, the human form divine. Is this clear? In other words the psychic problem that I had found myself in was that for various reasons it had seemed to me at one time or another that the best thing to do was to drop dead. Or not be afraid of death but go into death. Go into the non-human, go into the cosmic so to speak; that God was death, and if I wanted to attain God I had to die. Which *may* still be true. So I thought that what I was put up to was to therefore break out of my body, if I wanted to attain complete consciousness.

So now the next step was that the gurus one after another said live in the body: this is the form that you're born for. That's too long a narration to go into. Too many holy men and too many different conversations and they all have a little *key* thing going. But it all winds up in the train in Japan, then a year later, the poem *The Change*, where all of a sudden I renounce drugs, I don't renounce drugs but I suddenly didn't want to be *dominated* by that non-human any more, or even

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be dominated by the moral obligation to enlarge my consciousness any more. Or do anything any more except *be* my heart—which just desired to be and be alive now. I had a very strange ecstatic experience then and there, once I had sort of gotten that burden off my back, because I was suddenly free to love myself again, and therefore love the people around me, in the form that they already were. And love myself in my own form as I am. And look around at the other people and so it was *again* the same thing like in the bookstore. Except this time I was completely in my body and had no more mysterious obligations. And nothing more to fulfill, except to be willing to die when I am dying, whenever that be. And be willing to live as a human in this form now. So I started weeping, it was such a happy moment. Fortunately I was able to write then, too, "So that I do live I will die"—rather than be cosmic consciousness, immortality, Ancient of Days, perpetual consciousness existing forever.

Then when I got to Vancouver, Olson was saying "I am one with my skin." It *seemed* to me at the time when I got back to Vancouver that everybody had been precipitated back into their bodies at the same time. It seemed that's what Creeley had *been* talking about all along. The *place*—the terminology he used, the *place* we are. Meaning this place, here. And trying to like, be real in the real place... to be aware of the place where he is. Because I'd always thought that that meant that he was cutting off from divine imagination. But what that meant for him was that this place would be everything that one would refer to as divine, if one were really here. So that Vancouver seems a very odd moment, at least for me—because I came back in a sense completely bankrupt. My energies of the last... oh, 1948 to 1963, all completely washed up. On the train in Kyoto having renounced Blake, renounced visions—renounced *Blake*!—too. There was a cycle that began with the Blake vision which ended on the train in Kyoto when I realized that to attain the depth of consciousness that I was seeking when I was talking about the Blake vision, that in order to attain it I had to cut myself off from the Blake vision and renounce it. Otherwise I'd be hung up

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on a memory of an experience. Which is not the actual awareness of now, now. In order to get back to now, in order to get back to the total awareness of now and contact, sense perception contact with what was going on around me, or direct vision of the moment, now I'd have to give up this continual churning thought process of yearning back to a visionary state. It's all very complicated. And idiotic.

INTERVIEWER

I think you said earlier that *Howl* being a lyric poem, and *Kaddish* basically a narrative, that you now have a sense of wanting to do an epic... Do you have a plan like this?

GINSBERG

Yeah, but it's just... ideas, that I've been carrying around for a long time. One thing which I'd like to do sooner or later is write a long poem which is a narrative and description of all the visions I've ever had, sort of like the *Vita Nuova.* And travels, now. And another idea I had was to write a big long poem about everybody I ever fucked or slept with. Like sex... a love poem. A long love poem, involving all the innumerable lays of a lifetime. The epic is not that, though. The epic would be a poem including history, as it's defined. So that would be one about present-day politics, using the methods of the Blake *French Revolution.* I got a lot written. Narrative was *Kaddish.* Epic—there has to be totally different organization, it might be simple free association on political themes—in fact I think an epic poem including history, at this stage. I've got a lot of it written, but it would have to be Burroughs' sort of epic, in other words it would have to be *dis*-sociated thought stream which includes politics and history. I don't think you could do it in narrative form, I mean what would you be narrating, the history of the Korean War or something?

INTERVIEWER

Something like Pound's epic?

GINSBERG

No, because Pound seems to me to be over a course of

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years fabricating out of his reading and out of the museum of literature; whereas the thing would be to take all of contemporary history, newspaper headlines and all the pop art of Stalinism and Hitler and Johnson and Kennedy and Vietnam and Congo and Lumumba and the South and Sacco and Vanzetti—whatever floated into one's personal field of consciousness and contact. And then to compose like a basket—like weave a basket, basket-weaving out of those materials. Since obviously nobody has any idea where it's all going or how it's going to end unless you have some vision to deal with. It would have to be done by a process of association, I guess.

INTERVIEWER

What's happening in poetry now?

GINSBERG

I don't know yet. Despite all confusion to the contrary, now that time's passed, I think the best poet in the United States is Kerouac still. Given twenty years to settle through. The main reason is that he's the most free and the most spontaneous. Has the greatest range of association and imagery in his poetry. Also in *Mexico City Blues* the sublime as subject matter. And, in other words the greatest facility at what might be called projective verse. If you want to give it a name. I think that he's stupidly underrated by almost everybody except for a few people who are aware how beautiful his composition is—like Snyder or Creeley or people who have a taste for his tongue, for his line. But it takes one to know one.

INTERVIEWER

You don't mean Kerouac's prose?

GINSBERG

No, I'm talking about just a pure poet. The verse poetry, the *Mexico City Blues* and a lot of other manuscripts I've seen. In addition he has the one sign of being a great poet, which is he's the only one in the United States who knows how to write haikus. The only one who's written any good haikus. And everybody's been writing haikus. There are all these

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*dreary* haikus written by people who think for weeks trying to write a haiku, and finally come up with some dull little thing or something. Whereas Kerouac thinks in haikus, every time he writes anything—talks that way and thinks that way. So it's just natural for him. It's something Snyder noticed. Snyder has to labor for years in a Zen monastery to produce one haiku about shitting off a log! And actually does get one or two good ones. Snyder was always astounded by Kerouac's facility... at noticing winter flies dying of old age in his medicine chest. Medicine cabinet. "In my medicine cabinet / the winter flies / died of old age." He's never published them actually—he's published them on a record, with Zoot Sims and Al Cohn, it's a very beautiful collection of them. Those are as far as I can see the only real American haikus.

So the haiku is the most difficult test. He's the only *master* of the haiku. Aside from a longer style. Of course the distinctions between prose and poetry are broken down anyway. So much that I was saying like a long page of oceanic Kerouac is sometimes as sublime as epic line. It's there that also I think he went further into the existential thing of writing conceived of as an irreversible action or statement, that's unrevisable and unchangeable once it's made. I remember I was thinking, yesterday in fact, there was a time that I was absolutely astounded because Kerouac told me that in the future literature would consist of what people actually wrote rather than what they tried to deceive other people into thinking they wrote, when they revised it later on. And I saw opening up this whole universe where people wouldn't be able to lie any more! They wouldn't be able to *correct* themselves any longer. They wouldn't be able to hide what they said. And he was willing to go all the way into that, the first pilgrim into that new-found land.

INTERVIEWER

What about other poets?

GINSBERG

I think Corso has a great inventive genius. And also amongst the greatest *shrewdness*—like Keats or something. I like La-

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mantia's nervous wildness. Almost anything he writes I find interesting—for one thing he's always registering the forward march of the soul, in exploration; spiritual exploration is always there. And also chronologically following his work is always exciting. Whalen and Snyder are both very wise and very reliable. Whalen I don't *understand* so well. I did, though, earlier—but I have to sit down and study his work, again. Sometimes he seems sloppy—but then later on it always seems right.

McClure has tremendous energy, and seems like some sort of a... seraph is not the word... not herald either but a... not demon either. Seraph I guess it is. He's always moving—see when I came around to say getting in my skin, there I found McClure sitting around talking about being a mammal! So I suddenly realized he was way ahead of me. And Wieners... I always *weep* with him. Luminous, luminous. They're all old poets, everybody knows about those poets. Burroughs is a poet too, really. In the sense that a page of his prose is as *dense* with imagery as anything in St. Perse or Rimbaud, now. And it has also great repeated rhythms. Recurrent, recurrent rhythms, even rhyme occasionally! What else... Creeley's very stable, solid. I get more and more to like certain poems of his that I didn't understand at first. Like *The Door*, which completely baffled me because I didn't understand that he was talking about the same heterosexual problem that I was worried about. Olson, since he said "I feel one with my skin." First thing of Olson's that I liked was *The Death of Europe* and then some of his later Maximus material is nice. And Dorn has a kind of long, *real* spare, manly, political thing—but his great quality inside also is tenderness—"Oh the graves not yet cut." I also like that whole line of what's happening with Ashbery and O'Hara and Koch, the area that they're going for, too. Ashbery—I was listening to him read *The Skaters*, and it sounded as inventive and exquisite, in all its parts, as *The Rape of the Lock*.

INTERVIEWER

Do you feel you're in command when you're writing?

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GINSBERG

Sometimes I feel in command when I'm writing. When I'm in the heat of some truthful tears, yes. Then, complete command. Other times—most of the time not. Just diddling away, woodcarving, getting a pretty shape; like most of my poetry. There's only a few times when I reach a state of complete command. Probably a piece of *Howl*, a piece of *Kaddish*, and a piece of *The Change*. And one or two moments of other poems.

INTERVIEWER

By command do you mean a sense of the whole poem as it's going, rather than parts?

GINSBERG

No—a sense of being self-prophetic master of the universe.

—THOMAS CLARK

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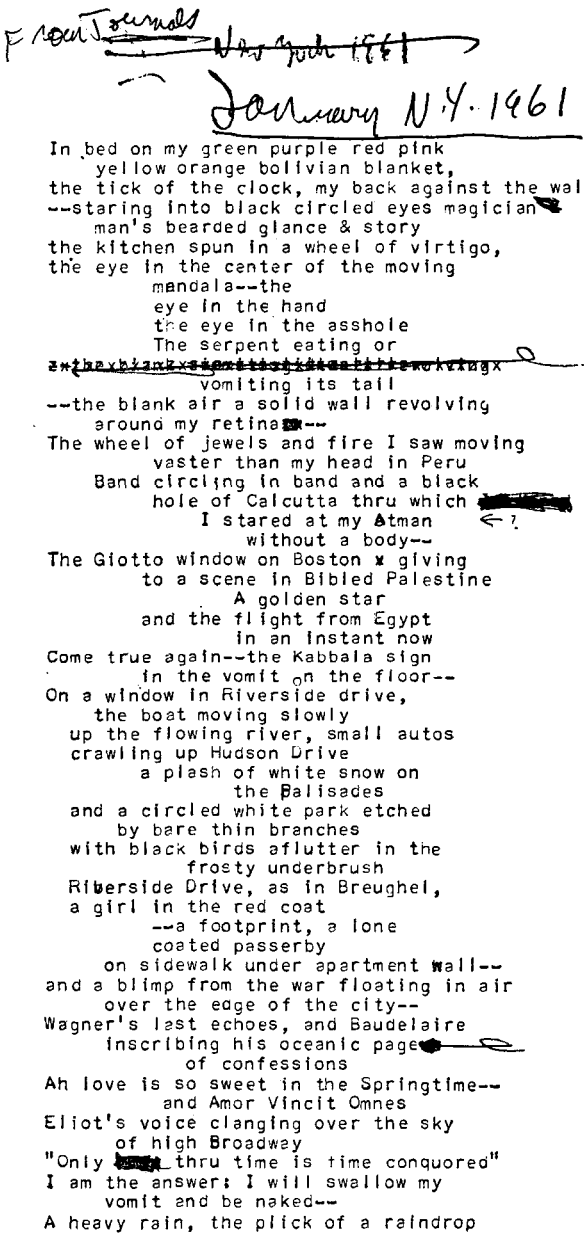

From Journals New York 1961

January N.Y. 1961

In bed on my green purple red pink
yellow orange bolivian blanket,
the tick of the clock, my back against the wall
--staring into black circled eyes magician
man's bearded glance & story
the kitchen spun in a wheel of virtigo,
the eye in the center of the moving
mandala--the
eye in the hand
the eye in the asshole
The serpent eating or
vomiting its tail
--the blank air a solid wall revolving
around my retina--
The wheel of jewels and fire I saw moving
vaster than my head in Peru
Band circling in band and a black
hole of Calcutta thru which
I stared at my Atman
without a body--
The Giotto window on Boston giving
to a scene in Bibled Palestine
A golden star
and the flight from Egypt
in an instant now
Come true again--the Kabbala sign
in the vomit on the floor--
On a window in Riverside drive,
the boat moving slowly
up the flowing river, small autos
crawling up Hudson Drive
a plash of white snow on
the Palisades
and a circled white park etched
by bare thin branches
with black birds aflutter in the
frosty underbrush
Riverside Drive, as in Breughel,
a girl in the red coat
--a footprint, a lone
coated passerby
on sidewalk under apartment wall--
and a blimp from the war floating in air
over the edge of the city--
Wagner's last echoes, and Baudelaire
inscribing his oceanic page
of confessions
Ah love is so sweet in the Springtime--
and Amor Vincit Omnes
Eliot's voice clanging over the sky
of high Broadway
"Only thru time is time conquored"
I am the answer: I will swallow my
vomit and be naked--
A heavy rain, the plick of a raindrop

① Sept 28 1964

E. 2 STREET
HIGH
★
W/ Harry Smith
★
OPTICAL
PHENOMENA
★
REMEMBERING
LEARY'S BEDROOM
HARVARD
JACK HALLUCINATI
★
OUT ROBT.
LOWELL'S WINDOW

★

UNSTEADILY
WALKING
IN
MANHATTAN
NEAR WHERE
POE WROTE
THE
RAVEN

*Manuscript page of an unpublished Ginsberg poem*

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Allen Ginsberg

# *Fragment 1957-The Names*

Time comes spirit weakens and goes blank apartments shuffled through and forgotten
The dead in their cenotaphs locomotive high schools & African cities smalltown motorcycle graves
O America what saints given vision are shrouded in junk their elegy nameless hoodlum elegance leaning against deaths military garage
Huncke who first saw the sun revolve Chicago survived into middleage Times Square
Thief stole hearts of wildcat tractor boys arrived to morphine brilliance Bickford table midnight neon to take a fall
arrested 41 times late 40's his acne'd skin & black spanish hair grown coy and old and lip bitten in Rikers Island Jail
as bestial newsprint photograph we shared once busted, me scared of black eye cops Manhattan
you blissful nothing to lose digging the live detectives perhaps even offering God a cigarette
I'll answer you Huncke I never could before—admiring your natural tact and charm and irony—now sad Sing Sing
whatever inept Queens burglary you goofed again let God judge his sacred case
rather than mustached Time Judge steal a dirty photograph of your soul—I knew you when—
& you loved me better than my lawyer wanted frightened rat for official thousand buck mousetrap, no doubt, no doubt—
Shine in Cell free behind bars Immortal soul why not
Hell machine can't sentence except itself, have I to do that?
It gives jail I give you poem, bars last twenty years rust in hundred
my handwork remains when prisons fall because the hand is compassion.



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Brilliant bitter Morphy stalking Los Angeles after his ghost boy
haunting basements in Denver with his Montmartre black beard
Charming ladies oft for a purpose I heard great cat Shakespearean sex
first poet suicide I knew sat on park benches watched despair his forehead star
my elder asked serious advice, gentle man! international queer pride broken to pre-death cigarette gun fright
Love a young blond demon of broken army nemesis his own mad cock for the kid's sardonic ass
his dream mouthful of white prick trembling in his head—woke a bullet in his side days later in Passaic
last moments gasping stricken blood under stars coughing intestines & lighted highway cars flowing past his eyes into the dark.

Joe Army's beauty forgotten that night, pain cops nightmare, drunken AWOL through Detroit
phonecalls angels backrooms & courtmartial lawyer trains a kaleidoscope of instant change,
shrinkage of soul, bearded dead dreams, all Balzac read in jail,
late disappearance from the city hides metamorphosis to humancy loathing that deathscene.
Phil Black hung in tombs, horsefaced junky, dreamy strange murderer, forgotten pistol three buck holdup, stoolpigeon suicide I save him from the grave

Iroquois his indian head red cock intelligence buried in miserous solitaire politics
his narcissistic blond haired hooknosed pride, I made him once he groaned and came
Later stranger chill made me tremble, I loved hopeless years,
he's hid in Seattle consumed by lesbian hypochondriacs stealthy communion, green bullfighters envy age,
unless I save him from the grave, but he won't talk no more
much less fall in my arms or any mental bed forgiveness be-

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fore we climb Olympics death,
Leroi returning to bughouse monkishness & drear stinky soupdish his fatness fright & suffering mind insult a repetitious void
"I have done my best to make saintliness as uninteresting as possible"
and has succeeded, when did I last write or receive ambiguous message jokey hangdog prophetic spade

Joan in dreams bent forward smiling asks news of the living
as in life the same sad tolerance, no skullbone judge of drunks
asking whereabouts sending regards from Mexican paradise garden where life & death are one
a postcard from eternity sent with human hand, wish I could see you now, it's happening as should
whatever we really need, we ought get, don't blame yourself —a photograph on reverse
the rare tomb-smile where trees grow crooked energy above grass—an infantile paralysis limp, lacklove, the worst
I dreamed such vision of her secret in my frisco bed, heart can live rest by my, or her, desire—love.

Bill King black haired sorry drunken wop lawyer, woke up trembling in Connecticut DT's among cows
Him there to recover I guess, but made his way back to New York shuddering to fuck stiff Time girls,
Death charm in person, sexual childlike radiant pain
See his face in old photographs & bandaged naked wrist leaning melancholy contemplating the camera
awkward face now calm, kind to me in cafeteria one sober morn looking for jobs at breakfast,
but mostly smiled at roof edge midnight, all 1920's elegance reincarnate in black vomit bestriven suit
& scratchy records *Mahagony* airplane crash, lushed young man of 40's hated his fairy woe, came on Lizzie's belly or Ansen's cock in desperate orgies of music canopener
God but I loved his murdered face when he talked with a mouthful of rain in 14th St subway—

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where he fell skull broken underground last, head crushed by the radiant wheel on iron track
Farewell dear Bill that's done, you're gone, we all go into the ancient void drunkard mouth
You made it too soon, here was more to say, & more to drink, but now too late to sit and talk
all night toward the eternity you sought so well so fearlessly in so much alcoholic pain with so much fire behind eyes with such
sweet manner in your heart that never won a happy fate thru what bleak years you saw your red skull burning deathshead in the U.S. sun.
Mix living dead, N.C., old hero of travel love alyosha idiot seektrain poems, what crown you wear at last
what fameless reward for patience & pain, what golden whore come secret from the clouds, what god bidden for coffin & heart someday,
what will give back your famous arm, your happy catholic boy eye, orphan torso shining in poolhall & library, intimate spermworks with old girls downtown rock-abelly energy,
what Paradise built high enough to hold your desire, deep enough to encompass your cock kindnesses, soft for your children to pray, 10 foot iron wheels you fell under?
what American heaven receive you? Christ allow sufferings then will he allow you His opening tinbarrel Iowa light as Jerusalem?
O Neal that life end we together on knees know harvest of prayers together,
Paradise autos ascend to the moon no illusion, short time earth life Bibles bear our eyes make it dear baby
stay with me Angel now in Shroud of railroad lost bet race-track broke leg oblivion
till I get the shining Word or you the cockless cock to lay in my ass hope mental radiance—

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It's all lost we fall without glory to empty tomb comedown to nothing but evil thinkless worm, but we know better
merely by old heart hope, or merely Desire, or merely the love whisper breathed in your ear on lawns of long gone by Denver,
merely by night you leaned on my body & held me for All & called me Adore I wondered at child age ten I
wandered by hopeless green hedges, you sat under alley balcony garbagestair, ache in the breast Futurity
meeting Love for Love, so wept as child now man I weep for true end,
Save from the grave! O Neal I love you I bring this Lamb into the middle of the world happily—O tenderness—to see you again—O tenderness—to recognize you in the middle of Time.

—ALLEN GINSBERG

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# Several Garlic Tales

Donald Barthelme

## I

Amelia and Paul moved dreaming through the color photographs of human lives *in articulo mortis*, in Europe, in the album. "First," Paul said, regarding the first photograph closely, "we visit Denmark's unique Tivoli Gardens with their bursting green, red and blue and silver fireworks at a quarter to twelve. Bawdy pantomime it says here." They looked in every direction but all they could see was a few hundred chaps from the U.S. Department of Commerce. "Those chaps from Commerce turn up everywhere," Amelia noted. "That must be a really fascinating Department to have so many decent-looking young men, chaps I mean, in it, at the point of death." Paul looked at Amelia as if he would like to strangle her. What a thing to say! Especially now, on Thermidor the thirteenth! (It's too bad Amelia is Japanese. Not in itself, for I like Japanese people and their warm buttered legs, but this pachinko parlor is driving me...)

## II

Ezra looked carefully around the French room. Yes, it was empty. If one excluded Paul. Excluding Paul was the reason Ezra was looking around the room. Ezra pretended not to see Paul. Yet Paul was palpably present. There he is, sitting on a cask, mending his pike. (Well, I can't ignore him forever, Ezra concluded.) That damned Paul is always busy. Never an idle moment to imbue with the raincoat colors of fancy under the ax. Would that I could say of you, Paul,



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that you left things alone once in a while. But in fact you are always tampering. Those strong brown fingers forever shuttling back and forth like some insane loom weaving beautiful Czasy tapestries in brilliant hues.

Paul is not serious. It is what everybody says of him. How to give him a degree of seriousness that would lift his works to importance?

"Did you bring the twine?"

"Yes, here's your damned twine!"

## III

I took her to the picture show. The pictures "moved." We saw "pictures." A certain number of apologies were offered. I have divided the "moving" pictures into forty-eight squares, eight across, six down. Each square contains a part of either Greta Garbo, C. Aubrey Smith, John Gilbert, or pseudo-medieval decor. The "picture" is of course *Queen Christina*. The length of the film is, I don't know, an hour or so. If each "frame" is divided into forty-eight squares and each square described meticulously, in the Turkish manner, there is a danger of tedium. Especially if we also "fold in" (Rombauer) the emotions and responses excited in the brains and breasts of those hired to "watch" the "picture."

"All this literary criticism," Elspeth said to Paul. "I don't know. I don't know if I like it. I don't know if it pleases me." They regarded the Ankara critic on the shelf.

## IV

Paul stood before a fence in Luxembourg. The fence was covered with birds. Their problem, in many ways a paradigm of our own, was to "fly." "The engaging and wholly charming way I stand in front of this fence here," Paul said to himself, "will soon persuade someone to discover me." Lanky, generous-hearted Paul! "If I had been born well prior to 1920

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I could have ridden with Pershing against Pancho Villa. Alternately, I could have ridden with Villa against the landowners and corrupt government officials of the time. In either case, I would have had a horse. How little opportunity there is for young men to have personally-owned horses in the bottom half of the twentieth century! A wonder that we U.S. youth can still fork a saddle at all... Of course there are those 'horses' under the hoods of Buicks and Pontiacs, the kind so many of my countrymen favor. But those 'horses' are not for me. They take the tan out of my cheeks and the lank out of my arms and legs. Tom Lea or Pete Hurd will never paint me standing by this fence if I am sitting inside an Eldorado, Starfire, Riviera or Mustang, no matter how attractively the metal has been bent."

Howard was extremely irritated. What about the "match" scheduled for tonight? Would it be called off, as so many other scheduled activities had been?

## V

Ezra's father put down his instrument case.

"I love acting in this Czechoslovakian People's Theatre," he said. "But the director is a fool. Trying to cover up our American accents with these trombones."

## VI

The trawler made a smooth landing in the fjord country of Norway. "Sightseeing" would be a cheap word for what they were experiencing.

Yum Yum wrinkled behind her fan. Paul resolved to "have it out" with her. "Have a cigar," he said. "All the Scandinavian girls smoke them."

Amelia, or "Yum Yum," stamped her tiny imperious foot in its "geta," or wooden sandal, on the square "paving stone," or big flat piece of rock. "All the Scandinavian girls smoke them! All the Scandinavian girls smoke them! All the Scannavian girls smoke them! All the Scandinavian girls smoke

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them! All the Scandinavian girls smoke them! Paul you are trying to make me something I'm not. Just like when you wanted me to wear those white rubber pajamas! I don't care if they were in all the newspapers! And just like when you wanted me to be like that girl in the film! I don't care if it did win the Golden Fig at Cannes! And just like when you wanted me to be like the beautiful horse in that book! I don't care if you did own the first North American serial rights! I can't stand it any longer! Do you hear me!"

(Quell. To quell. Quelling the outburst.) "There is nothing to get excited about," Paul said.

## VII

The bishop in his red mantelpiece strode forward. "Yes, we are in a terrible hurricane here," he acknowledged to the wrecked cries of the survivors. "If we can just cross that spit of land there," (gesture with fingers, glitter of episcopal rings) "and get to that harlot over there," (sweep of arm in white lacy alb) "pardon, I meant *hamlet*, we can perhaps find shelter against this particular vicissitude sent by God to break our backs for our sins." The "flock" moaned aloud. They had been eight days without... The sudden pall on the fourth day had been the worst. There was a silence. Silence. Everything silent. Not a sound for six hours. Nothing. "This is the worst," they murmured to one another in sign language, not wanting to... break the... A few young men of good family crawled away into the night to find help (tingle of mace against bone). The Marchesa de G. had fainted again. Blockflutes were heard.

"So this is Spain!"

## VIII

Elspeth inspected the new German army. Well, I'll say one thing, the Germans certainly know how to "put on" an

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army! From the mortar pit where she was standing she could see all the way back to O.K.H. headquarters. So many soldiers "ranked up" in lines! And such good-looking lines! No wonder General de Gaulle was thoughtful. "Are you going to behave, this time?" she asked a common soldier. "Da," he said.

But who is that? in the rearmost rank? Isn't that *Paul*?

"Paul what are you doing in that foreign army? Don't you know that's a good way to get your passport blown out?"

They drank "rosinwasser." A sadness drifted over them. Then came "lunch."

Anything for a stripe, is that it, Paul?

## IX

Greece. "When we turn our amplifiers on," said Eliot, strumming his suit, "already cant is forming over some people's minds, like the brown crust on bread, or the silence that 'crusts over' inappropriate remarks. I think there ought to be, and remember I'm talking normatively here, I think what ought to obtain is a measure of *audacity*, an audacity component, such as turning your amplifier up a little higher than anybody else's, or using a fork to pick and strum, rather than a plectrum or the carefully calloused fingertips, or doing something with your elbow, I don't care what, I insist only that it be *relevant*, in a strange way, to the scene that has chosen to spread itself out before us, the theatre of our lives. And if you other gentlemen will come with me down to the quai, carrying your amplifiers in boxes, and not forgetting the trailing cords, which have to be 'plugged in,' so that we can 'turn on'..."

## X

Paul handed over the green and gold armband. What a defeat for one who had hoped to make the Italian Postal

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Service his entire life and breath! "I hope you don't mind that I have left my shirt in that damned Otis elevator." "No. I don't mind. I like chests. Especially with strong American brains behind them." Elspeth wondered what attitude she should adopt. If only she were not pledged to Howard. Howard with his preoccupation with "boxing." Even now, she suspected, Howard was out somewhere, on the streets, in the midst of this... *noise*, with his friend Pete. Pete, who always remembered something. Those interminable remembered fragments!

Amelia pulled her brilliant silver, green and black kimono more tightly around her slight but incredibly beautiful Japanese "figure." Paul was welding flanges to everything in sight. He looked very athletic and workmanlike in his great mask. His sparks contributed to the... In the sky black clouds appeared, like fine-line seventeenth-century steel engravings showing Raleigh being stripped of his honors. "Half-life," the radium salesman said, "in the case of radium for instance is estimated at—" Now everything has been clarified. A half-life! That is what I wanted all the time! That is what I have been searching ceaselessly, for.

Will we ever fly without the aid of mechanical contrivances? Without seat-belts? Without roar?

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Charles Olson

# *MAXIMUS FROM DOGTOWN-II*

the Sea—turn yr Back on
the Sea, go inland, to
Dogtown: the Harbor

the shore the City
are now
shitty, as the Nation

is—the World
tomorrow unless
the Princes

of the Husting the sons
who refused to be Denied
the Demon (if Medea

kills herself—Medea
is a Phoenician
wench, also Daughter

of the Terror) as J-son
Johnson Hines
son Hines

sight Charles
John Hines
Ol'
son

the Atlantic
Mediterranean
Black Sea time



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is done in done for gone
Jack Hammond
put a stop to

surface underwater galaxy
time: there is no sky
space or sea left

earth is interesting
ice is interesting
stone is interesting

flowers are
Carbon
Carbon is
Carboniferous
Pennsylvania

Age
*under*
Dogtown
the stone

the watered
rock Carbon
flowers, rills

Aquarian Time
after fish
—fish was

Christ o Christ pick the seeds
out of yr teeth—how handsome
the dead dog lics! (horror X

the Migma is where
Seeds Christ was supposed to pick out
:Wyngaershoek hoik Grape Vine HOYK the Dutch

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& the Norse
and Algonquins:
He-with-the-House-on-his-Head

she-who-Lusted After-the
Snake-in-the-Pond
Dogtown berries smell

as The-Grub-Eaten-Fish-Take-The-Smell-Out-Of-The
Air a e r the Ta of
Dogtown (the Ta metarsia

is the Angel Matter
not to come until (rill!
3000; we will carry water

up the hill the Water the Water to
make the Flower hot—Jack
& Jill will

up Dogtown hill on top one day the
Vertical American thing will
show from Heaven the ladder

come down to the Earth
of Us All, the Many who
know
    there is One!
    One Mother
    One Son

One Daughter
and Each the Father
of Him-Her-Self:

the Genetic
is Ma the Morphic
is Pa the City is Mother

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Polis, the Child-Made-Man-Woman is

(Mary's Son
Elizabeth's
Man) MONOGENE:
in COLLAGEN
the monogene, in Kollagen

LEAP onto
the LAND, the AQUARIAN
TIME

the greater the water you add
the greater the decomposition
so long as the agent is protein
the carbon of four is the corners

in stately motion to sing in high bitch voice the fables
of wood and stone and man and woman loved

and loving in the snow
and sun
the weather

on Dogtown
is protogonic but the other side of heaven
is Ocean

filled in the flower the weather
on Dogtown the other side of heaven
is Ocean

Dogtown the *under*
vault heaven
is Carbon Ocean
is Annisquam

Dogtown the *under*
vault—the 'mother'
rock: the Diamond (Coal) the Pennsylvanian

Age the soft
(Coal) LOVE

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Age the soft (Coal love
hung-up burning
under the City: bituminous

Heart to be turned to Black
Stone the Black Chrysanthemum
is the Throne of Creation Ocean

is the Black Gold Flower

—CHARLES OLSON

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# *PRESENCE*

and I am lost in the ringing elevator
sweeping me to the top
there there were pine needles
dreams of symbolism
star light the cord "reaches"
sheepish lights you turned me on
Bildungsroman of the bathrobe ride
and the briny sound of the alarm
Love
ribbons your presence on the white and green sheet
in the ideal society pants
I had asked for a hook-and-ladder
the top had been "sliced"
a funny feeling prompted me out of bed
reflecting dilemmas majorities
it was turkey
the part that goes over the fence last
one is reminded of constellations
he waggles the fat whiteness of milk
takes The End.

Now we can make some explosions
shine like money
Francis is not a diminutive thank you
others are less legs
thighs wings breast
that night we slept reverently (you lust
I must lust in–
vigorating the sixteen genre
dragon bottle-opener
spiral cuff-link aerial
grease Caress the window, John
as you are not yet 12
19? 40? who pulls me down?
facade of the wonderful orient word
"doilies"



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74

Overhead the moon is out
blacking my shoes, face
we were all livid, numinous

Things whip toward the center
licking the palate of his headache
this indicates your future
meditates on his wish which is
hooked onto the top and draped archly

Childhood fuses a mystery play
which ribbons the marvelous laurel the loop-
Take off your beautiful blouse, you foolish girl!
Are you list- with this ring I
eye thee
(that was later, out west, after more baseball
some turkey
a wristwatch, dictionary, sniper suit, rifle
to "meditate"
(is there room in the tune to atune in?)

They were incensed at his arrival
Now we are glad it was stinky
some paint them black in the face to be quaint or something
I don't know
one symbol fact seems valid
all hate it to be right
on the cards
which are sometimes funky (aesthetic) having
snow of feet and that a domination.
Then we had presence.

—TED BERRIGAN

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# *The Fiend*

Red-faced and romping in the wind
I too am reading the technical journals, but
Keeping Christmas-safe each city block
With tail-pin. My angels are losing patience,
Never win. Except at night. Then
I would like a silken thread
Tied round the solid blooming winter.
Trees stand stark-naked guarding bridal paths;
The cooling wind keeps blowing, and
There is a faint chance in geometric boxes!
It doesn't matter, though, to show he is
Your champion. Days are nursed on science fiction
And you tremble at the boots upon the earth
As my strength and I walk out and look for you.

—TED BERRIGAN

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# GO ROUND

Plunging donkey puberty devi
flings her thighs, swinging long
legs backward on her mount
hair tosst
gangle arms but eyes—
her eyes and smile are elsewhere:
swelling out and sailing to the future
off beyond five-colored clouds.

we enter this world trailing
slippery clouds of guts
incense of our flowery flesh
blossoms; crusht; re-turning
knots of rose meat open out to—over—
five-hued clouds—
the empty diamond of all space

And into withered, sturdy, body, stalks.
the dry branch dropping seeds.

plunging donkey
prancing horse and trappings
her mother watching,
shopping bag let down
beside her knees, against the bench,
in her eyes too, the daughter
whirling,
looking outward, knowing,

having once
stepped up on the
merry-go-
Round.



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# Oysters

First Samish Bay
then all morning, hunting oysters

A huge feed on white
wood State Park slab-plank bench-
and table
"at" Birch Bay
where we picked up rocks
for presents.

And ate oysters, fried—raw—cookt in milk
rolled in crumbs—
all we wanted.
ALL WE WANTED

& got back in our wagon,
drove away.

# Circumambulating Arunachala

For centuries Saddhus live and die
in dolmen rock-slab huts near
Arunachala.

Small girls with gaudy flowers
flash down the bare walk road
the weight, the power,
the full warm brilliance of the human mind
behind their eyes:
they die or sicken in a year.

Below the hill—
wells, ponds, spiky trees,
carvd fragments of soft bodies
female bellies,
centuries old.

—GARY SNYDER



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# Two Poems by Joanne Kyger

I didn't want to think

about what to say. How many people can hear my natural relatives

die anyway the rain was coming down. Outside it's like clear air

whistling around you and eat flesh.

'A climate of order in which lawful governments can function effectively

to keep it clean.

from bar to bar
her yellow eyes

one does not get enough

Even in the rain the wall
is a molecule of me? when I die

the mind takes space, *whose* control?

the war in Viet-nan

is there. it is speaking to you I wish to say

How long is it we stay together.

11. 12. 65

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I have gone on, to still another one, a young

french girl she is this time, my wife did not bear my child

nd I knew it.

The great log groaning from death

war and smoking, a hull of a ship turning

a great hull of a log and a large dog has given birth

to a large litter, a white one like a fetus is dying.

Indifferent

the landscape stinks, parts of decay, turning over on ill kept

bedclothes. Hills, familiar, behind the school, are ignorance

unsure, making knowledge a place half known

and covered without knowledge, arrogance, greed

eeing the soul slip from the chest, skeletons in the stars, devouring

5. 24. 65

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*Recent Drawings By*

# Jane Freilicher

Born in Brooklyn, Jane Freilicher began her activity as a painter while still at school. Her training included several years of study at Brooklyn College (B.A., 1947) and Columbia University (M.A., 1949) and, more important, a period of work under Hans Hofmann, to whom she feels, like so many of his former students, a great debt. Although the complex temperament of her painting prevents its being assigned to a single movement or group, she has been associated with the so-called New York School, particularly with the "second generation" of abstract expressionists. It should be pointed out that while abstractionism has entered her work to varying degrees and influenced many aspects of it, she has never at any point abandoned subject matter entirely. The subjects she most frequently chooses are the traditional ones of nude, still life and landscape. Their treatment in these drawings is especially interesting in its illumination of the graphic quality of her art, something from which, in her paintings, attention is apt to be distracted by their sumptuous and subtle deployment of color.

Miss Freilicher has spent most of her life in New York City and Water Mill, Long Island, except for brief trips abroad. Since 1952 she has shown at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery; her latest one-man exhibition was in November 1965. Last summer her paintings were seen in the exhibition of landscape painting sponsored by the New York Museum of Modern Art at the Spoleto Festival of Two Worlds.

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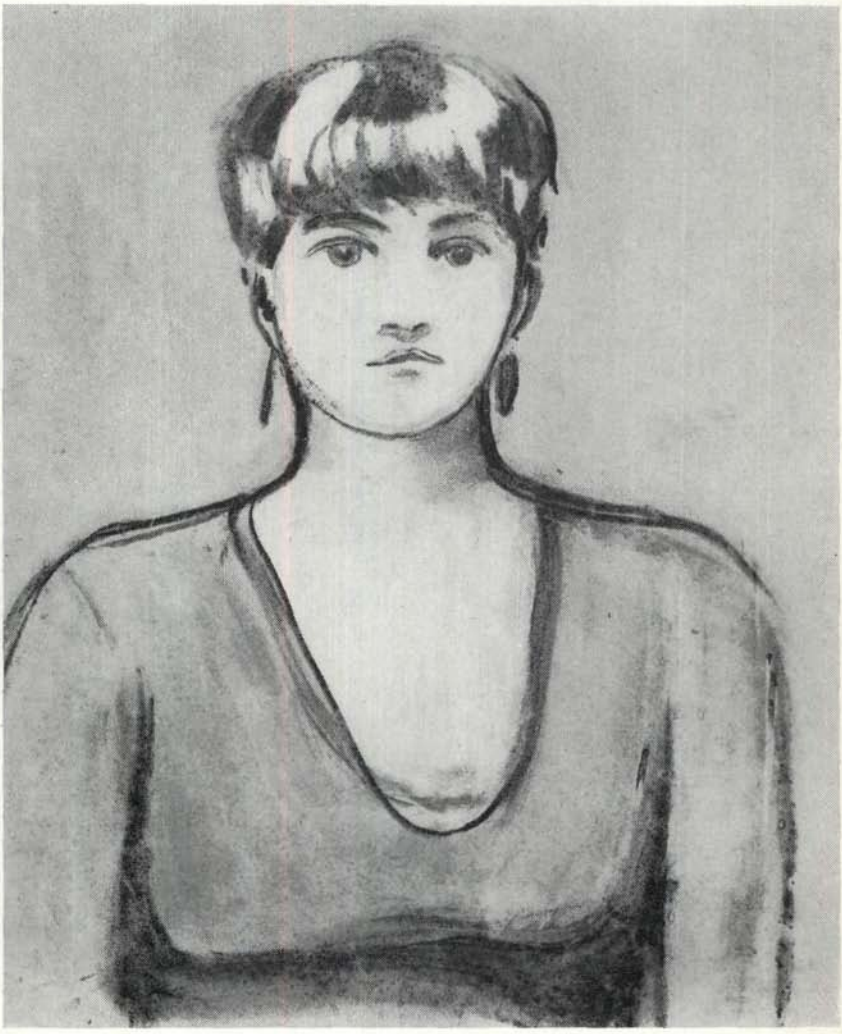

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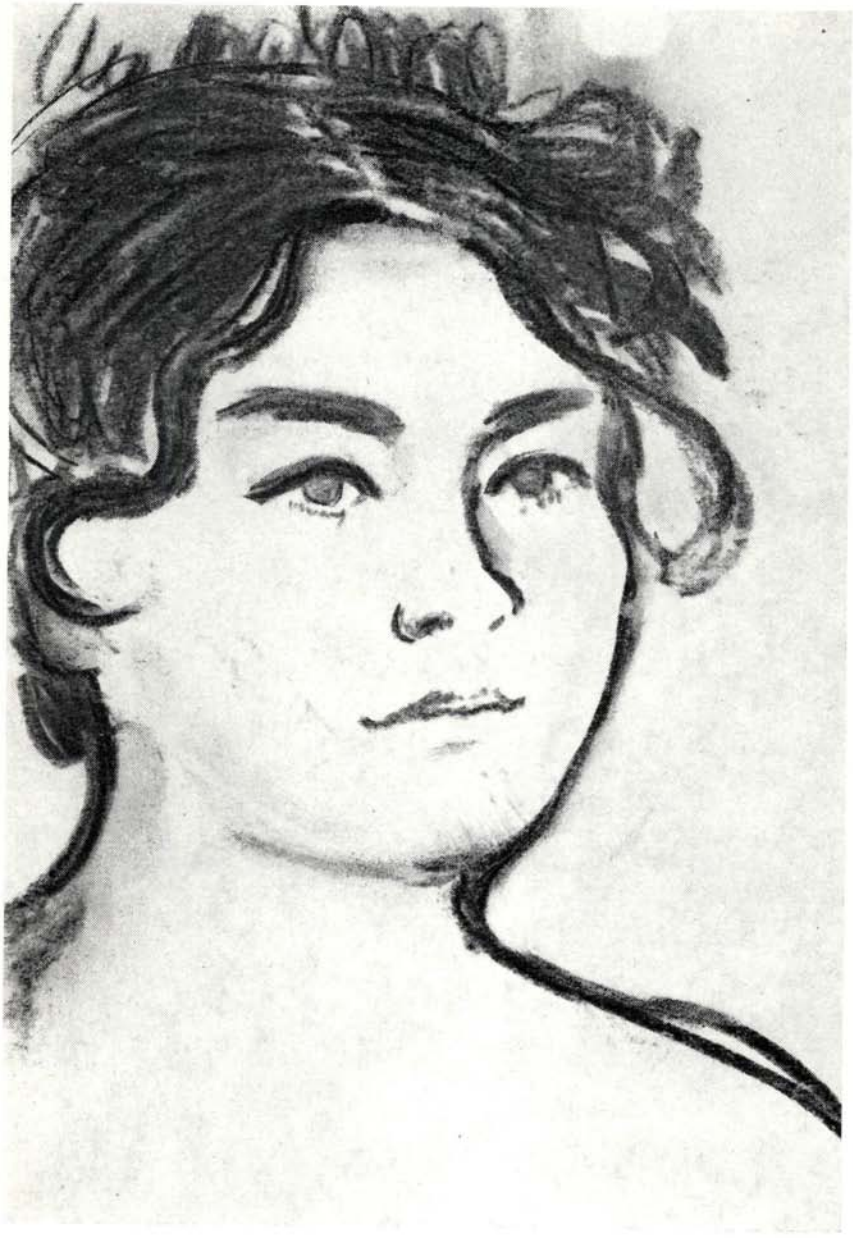

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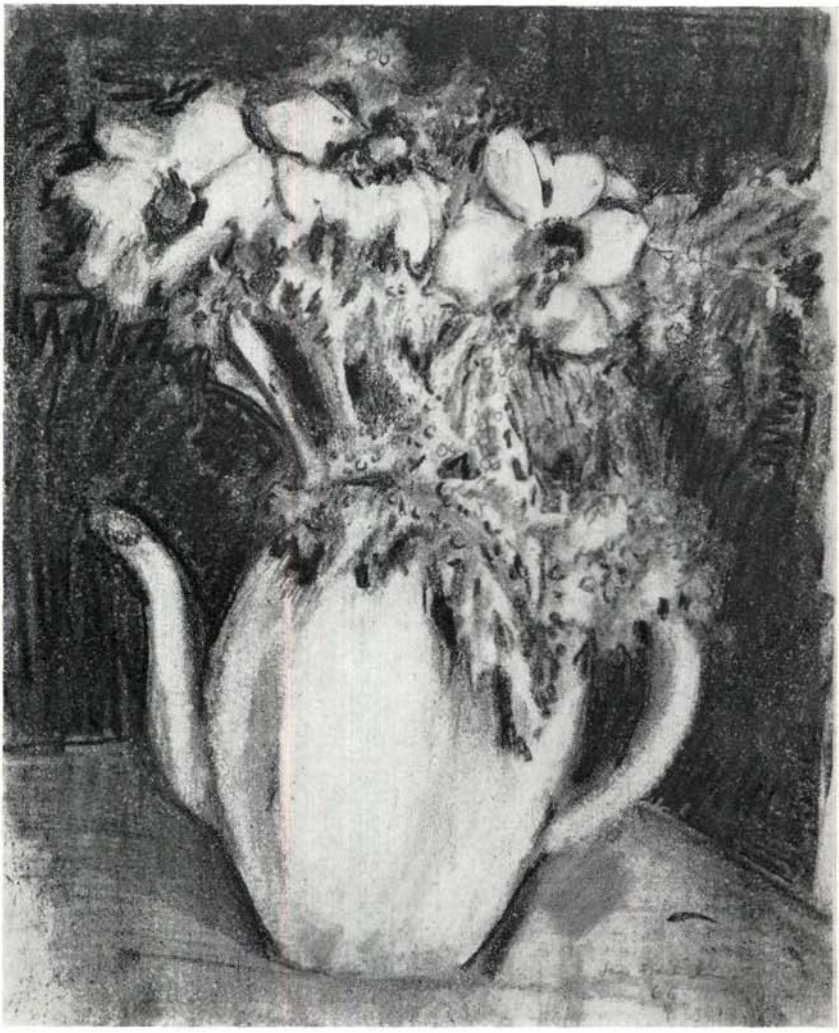

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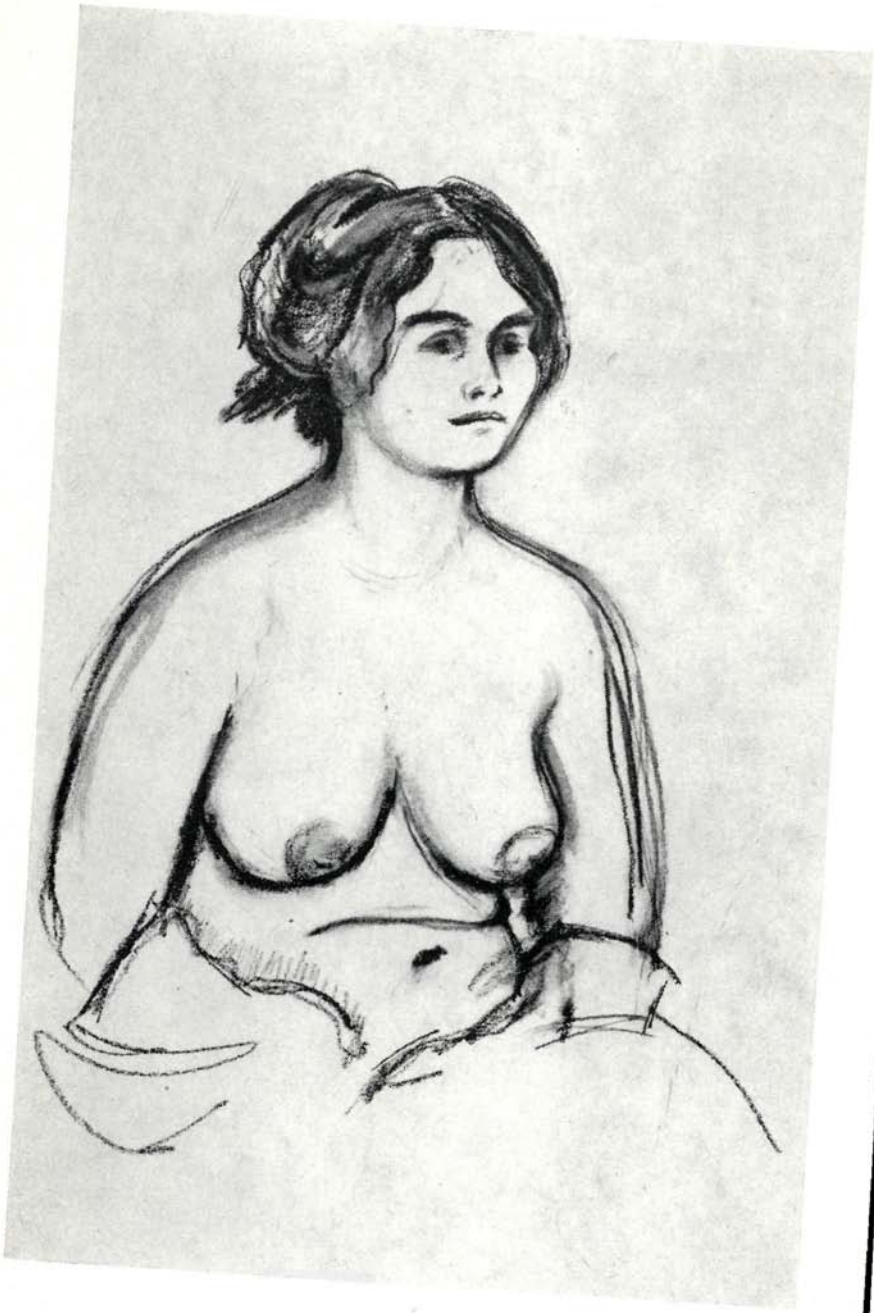

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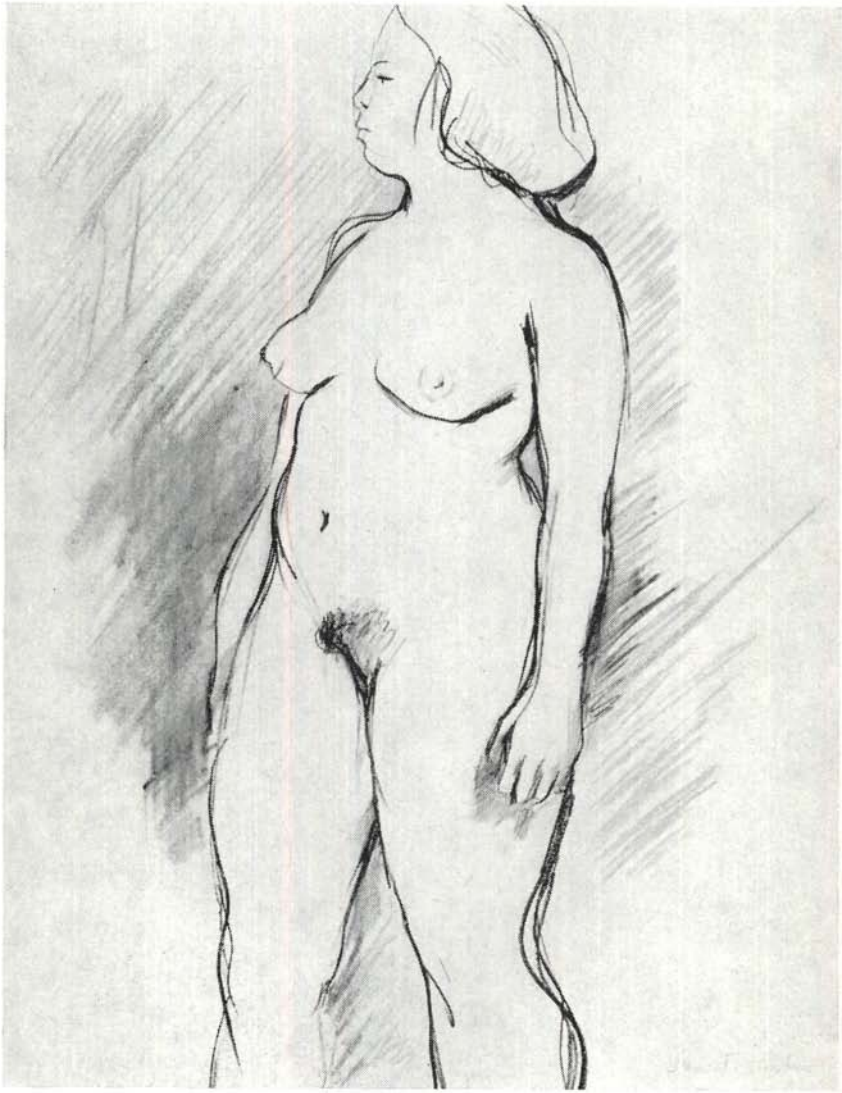

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# The Swimmer

Removing my watch, pleased with the morning weather,
I dove—I would cross the Atlantic by myself. Neither she,
Nor I, nor Brooklyn minded.

Still so near: I must swim harder. This striving
(On love's anniversary she had turned to mud in my bed)
For distance and brave attitude
Corrupted the serene wishlessness.

To be loved!—eyes dying, the reflection reflected...
It is true that for a little time peremptory shrewdness,
With no thought of "satin" or of arriving,
Became the querying solitude:

"While the citizens shudder and gasp, and embrace their dead"
—Petulantly I uttered a melancholy on the sea's graves.
A gull passes—rude
And abstract, limbs fatten.

With no gift to beguile, I must exhaust them or me.
No later than thirty kicks, perhaps in the diving,
All distance had fled;
The anticipation of violent liberty

Accompanied my cold strokes with lonely fitness,
Winsome with particularity. A gulp of saltwater crudely
Shakes the jittery contriving.
I floated in the shadow of waves:

Behind, past the harbor scurry, was smugly ambitious Manhattan:
Love, imagination and power are explorable seas.
I began talking to my knees,
Unkindly scissoring towards a kind



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Of emotions: "My thing wept at me. Everywhile it flattened,
Except for unpleasant uncertainties." The noon shined.
I am forbidden to desire some haven;
The sky and whitecaps are mine;

The darkness smites with iron the iron sea
And the limestone of sunset, sediment of lonely intimacies,
Extending its lidded periphery.
Where are eyes for new witness?

Have I worn out my distracting powers to doze witless
Into the scape of night, empty of detail and excuse,
To be chosen and not choose,
Hoping for a curable disease?

I came to an island of stone sensual clarity,
Serious and wet; and purely their teeth were feathers
Sifting gently ooze.
In dusk air, rods

Of veined alloy, pliant structures, nodded.
On buttery skin, between earlobes and fingerwebs, were inscribed
Gray lips and hair.
I learned to sleep undreaming,

They took me with calm fingers, I danced their yearning games
To each kissing other, tenderly, among brushed replies.
Yellow, murmuring, the tribe
Diverted its tearlike eyes

Of blown opal, their plastic integuments ripening
As accorded to sunken shafts—mandibles, bags,
Musical smiles and screams,
Blooms bent like flags,

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Voluptuous announcements. Each year I asked, "Is there
None, out of glory or doubt, who cast easy
Paradise for the zooming periods
Of knowledge passionately used,

The moment taken and transformed?"—"What you describe
Is Epilepsy, visionary folly and bait of the gods:
Some climbed those crags
Of orange accident where streamers

Ravel in brilliance, to sup the intoxication of air;
Blindly the divine nets gathered the dreamers,
Forlorn, forgotten refuse
Of our drowned and golden lair."

The darkness smites with iron the iron sea
And the limestone of sunset, sediment of lonely intimacies,
Extending its lidded periphery
Where are no eyes to witness.

I sit in Brooklyn, in an evening grave with names
And money. Gulls settle, and musics declare
The inexorable night together.

—HARRY MATHEWS

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# The Man Who Grew Younger

Jerome Charyn

Bernstein, the translator, warily climbed the first of the forty-nine steps that led to Misha's room: he was on the lookout for spiders and rats. He stopped after the twenty-fifth step and removed a lumpy handkerchief from his vest pocket. It was no small task for Bernstein to reach Misha's room, and yet time after time he found himself standing at the bottom of the stairway looking at the monstrous forty-nine steps.

"Misha, Misha," he mumbled plaintively to himself, and holding his swollen hand against his chest, he checked his heartbeat. A long furrow appeared at the back of his bald head. Bernstein was convinced that he was going to die before he reached the forty-ninth step. He cursed himself for associating with publishers and poets. And he petitioned the devil to destroy the stairway.

He knocked timidly on Misha's door. No one came to the door, but Bernstein was not worried. He knew that if he waited long enough, Misha would let him in. And so to while away the time he started talking to himself. He hurled prolific curses at Misha, and Popkin the publisher, and then cursed himself for not being a haberdasher. He envisioned himself boiling Misha and Popkin, Pushkin and Peretz, Gogol



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and Sholem Aleichem in a huge blackened pot. The door opened suddenly, and Misha's bloodless face startled Bernstein. His untrimmed moustache and deeply cloven chin reminded Bernstein of the sinister Jack of Spades he had once seen in a deck of hand-painted cards belonging to a one-eyed Armenian.

"So?" Bernstein said, "are you letting me in or not?" and then he shuffled past Misha, and entered Misha's room. Six or seven black penholders stood in a cracked jar on the desk near the door. A bottle of ink with a rubber plug and a single penpoint were stationed near the jar. A notebook with irregularly-lined paper sat on a narrow bench behind the desk. Bernstein hovered around Misha's steam pipe and slowly warmed his hands. Near the steam pipe was a toilet with a chipped seat, and a huge wooden basin that Misha used for a bathtub. Bernstein's jaw dropped suddenly and he moved away from the steam pipe. "Bandit," he called out, and he chased a cockroach across the room. Misha removed the plug from the ink bottle and selected a penholder. The cockroach eluded Bernstein, and he sat on the toilet seat and brooded for a moment. The sound of Misha's pen scratching the notebook paper roused him, and he placed his elbows on his knees and started rocking back and forth on the toilet seat. "Misha," he said, "Misha." He waited for Misha's pen to stop moving, but the scratching continued. "Misha, I talked again to Popkin. Misha..."

He stopped rocking on the toilet seat and clapped his knees together. "Misha, I'm sixty-seven years old. Can I go out now and look for a job?" He complained to the steam pipe. "A chance comes along once in a lifetime and he says no!" Then he stared darkly at Misha and started rocking again. "Sure, you can afford to be particular. You at least have Shaindele the Widow to look after you. But not everyone can be a poet. I don't have a widow to wash for me my underwear. After all... Misha, Misha!"

Misha's stooped back shielded him from Bernstein's onslaught, and he continued to lean over the desk and write. Bernstein decided to attack him from another position. He

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was not desperate; he knew that Misha was vulnerable. So he stood up and walked around the desk. Misha's face hardened, but the hand that held the pen trembled slightly. Bernstein gripped the edge of the desk and glared at Misha. The penholders rattled in the cracked jar.

"Forty years I worked with you, Misha. Forty years. I was for you an agent, a friend, a translator, a father!" He held out the swollen fingers of his left hand. "For five years I went to night school just to learn English so I could translate for you your stories and your poems. You remember, Misha, how I would run over to Henry Street in the snow or in the rain without galoshes or a scarf or a coat, and with my grammar book under my shirt so it shouldn't get wet. I did it for me, Misha, eh? For me! Sure, when they saw you sitting in Rattner's or the Royale, everybody said, 'Misha Dubrinoff, the Yiddish Lermontov!' And they all laughed at me. They saw me with my grammar book, and they called me *Yeshiva bucher*. After all, who needed Broadway when you had Second Avenue? And I warned you, and Shmulka, and Boris. Wait, I said, wait. In ten years everybody will move away from Delancey Street and then only the bedbugs and the lice will have the time to read your poems and your plays. So I wasn't a hundred percent right. It took thirty years instead of ten! Misha..."

Misha placed his pen on the table and closed the ink bottle. Bernstein pressed his perspiring face closer to him. "For twenty years I'm running after Popkin. 'Popkin,' I tell him, 'I know you publish books only in English. Who can blame you? After all, you're a businessman. So let me, I'll translate five or ten of Misha's stories, put them in a book, and I give you my personal guarantee that I will sell for you myself ten thousand copies. Misha is the king of Delancey Street. They worship him!' 'No,' he says, 'no. Who needs Yiddish poets!' 'Popkin, with my translation he'll be another Shakespeare.' 'One Shakespeare,' he says, 'is enough.' So I send him letters, and notes, and telegrams, I call him on the telephone three times every week, I curse him, I threaten him, but it does me no good. They see me come near his office and they

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lock the doors. He threatens yet to call the police. And then, all of a sudden, everybody is reading Peretz and Bashevis Singer, and it becomes fashionable to print Yiddish poets, and now he's the one who sends telegrams and notes. Misha, I know he's a low-life, but a publisher is a publisher!"

Bernstein produced three crumpled letters from his vest pocket. "Here, Misha, read for yourself." He placed the letters one at a time on the table. Misha walked away from the desk and stood near the toilet seat. Bernstein's temples pounded; he expected a heart attack or a stroke. He clasped his hands and calmed himself. "Misha, Misha. Do I have to walk around for the rest of my life with one suit to my name? Misha, do it, do it for me!" He shuffled blindly towards the toilet, banging his shoulder against the steam pipe. "Misha, if not for you I could have become a haberdasher, like my sister's husband. With my own store and everything. But I stuck instead with you..." Bernstein watched Misha's shoulders slump crookedly, and he continued his attack. "Sure, I could have married Faigele, the baker's daughter, and by now I would be living in Riverdale with two Buicks and seven Siamese cats. But who needs Riverdale? Misha, I'm asking from you something so terrible?... Misha, Misha, I'm trying to help you! With Popkin, who knows, you could even win a Pulitzer prize! Give me the green light. Misha, yes?"

"No."

Bernstein checked his heartbeat and dropped down on the toilet seat, frantically trying to regroup his forces for another attack. He stalled for a moment. "So give me at least a reason."

"I don't have to give out reasons. No is no."

"Misha. One reason."

The cleft in Misha's chin deepened and his nostrils flared.

"If Popkin wants me, let him publish the stories I'm writing now, not the stories I wrote thirty years ago."

"Misha, who can understand the stories you're writing now? I mean it! Now you write riddles, not stories. Cows that talk in ten languages, men who grow younger instead of older, women who go around naked day and night. Can

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you blame Popkin if he doesn't like them? You don't even bother to write sentences any more! Misha, honest to God, last week it took me three days to translate one line. I don't understand the stories in Yiddish, so how can I write them over in English?"

"Then let Popkin hire another translator!"

Bernstein stared dumbly at the steam pipe and mumbled to himself. "For forty years I work for him and now he says Popkin should find another translator." He closed his eyes and rocked back and forth on the toilet seat with a demonic half-broken rhythm; the hinges began to creak and the toilet bowl shook. The steam pipe caught the rhythm of the rocking toilet seat and belched in time to the jerky movements of Bernstein's bobbing head. One of the penholders fell out of the jar and rolled towards the edge of the desk. Bernstein quieted the toilet seat and shamefully opened one eye. Misha placed a package in his lap. Bernstein's fingers clutched the package incredulously.

"Go!" Misha said. "Burn together with Popkin."

Bernstein tried to mask his emotion. "Misha," he commanded, "are you sure you didn't leave out any of the old stories? Popkin wants all of them."

Misha lifted Bernstein off the toilet seat and carried him towards the door. Bernstein, cradled in Misha's arms, held the package against his chest. Misha put him down near the door.

"Bernstein," he said, "I never asked you to be my translator."

"I know," Bernstein said wistfully, "that's my fate."

Misha pushed him outside the door. "Misha, you won't regret it. You'll see. Stick with me, Misha, and you'll never go wrong." The door closed, but Bernstein kept talking. Then he paused and knocked on the door with one finger. "Misha?" He knocked again. "Misha?... Don't worry. Leave everything to me. I'll make sure that Popkin takes the story about the man who grows younger. I'll finish translating it tonight."

Bernstein gripped the banister with his left hand. And for

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the first time in his life the forty-nine steps did not gall him.

"Misha, Misha, Misha."

Shaindele the Widow stacked the empty Pepsi-Cola bottles in even rows near the steam pipe, and then, with one sweeping motion, she washed the rim of Misha's toilet bowl. Shaindele's washcloth was ubiquitous. Misha retreated behind his desk; he was in no mood to have his ears and his armpits scrubbed.

Shaindele cursed him three or four times. "Pig." Misha eyed her washcloth and remained behind his desk. She removed his books from the floor, dusted them, and paying no attention whatsoever to author or title, she arranged them on the shelf that her own brother, Itzie, had made for Misha. Misha despised the shelf and abused it in every way imaginable. But he knew that if the shelf disappeared his life would be in danger. Itzie Himmelfarb was the sheriff of Delancey Street. When Bilka Bendelson terrorized the entire East Side thirty years ago, Itzie organized every butcher from Ludlow Street to East Broadway. And one day in June Itzie and his butcher army marched on Bilka's Second Avenue headquarters, and drove Bilka and his stooges out of the East Side for good.

Shaindele put her washcloth on top of the shelf, and for the first time, Misha allowed himself to relax, and even dared to light a cigarette. Shaindele was allergic to smoke.

"Misha," Shaindele said, "so?"

Misha pretended that he was working. But in his heart he knew that there was no real way of avoiding her.

"So?" she said, "how long will I have to remain a widow?"

He sensed the futility of any answer he might give her, and did not answer at all. Shaindele picked up her washcloth again, and Misha dropped his cigarette.

"Misha," she said, "Itzie wants an answer. Five years is time enough. Yes or no."

Misha tried to avoid both Scylla and Charybdis. "No," and Itzie would be up in a minute and throw him off the roof. "Yes," and he would have to put up with Shaindele's washcloth day and night in this world and the next. But the con-

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stant agony of "maybe" was becoming for Misha a fate worse than Scylla and Charybdis combined.

"Misha," Shaindele said, "yes or no."

Misha glared at the Pepsi-Cola bottles stacked near the steam pipe. "No," he said, first to himself, and then to Shaindele. He had to tell her again before she would believe him. She folded her washcloth. Misha immediately felt safer.

"Wait," she said, "wait. Leads a widow on for five years. Wait. You expect Itzie to stand around while his sister is disgraced...Misha, I'm thinking now only of you. Maybe you should reconsider."

The cleft in Misha's chin deepened noticeably, and Shaindele knew right away that Misha's "no" was final. She felt a pain in her chest and started to cry. "Bum, bastard," she said. "A poet I had to pick! Itzie warned me not to wait around. He'll knock nails in your head for what you did to me. Nails."

From Misha's desk she stole the aluminum lamp with the retractable neck that she had given to him for his fifty-seventh birthday. She tore the lamp's shade and broke the retractable neck, and after depositing the remnants of the lamp on top of the shelf, she sneezed triumphantly and left.

The broken neck of the lamp kept swinging jauntily over the sides of the shelf and seemed to perform for Misha. He knew that it would be useless to hide or barricade the door, and so he sat and waited for Itzie. After searching through the shelf he found a battered copy of Sholem Aleichem's stories, and sitting at his desk, he began to read.

When Misha heard the doorknob rattle he put down the book. His knees were knocking uncontrollably, and he chided himself for being afraid. For a moment he even wished that he had stalled Shaindele at least a little while longer. He might have packed his books and moved uptown. But no matter where he had gone—Parkchester, Scarsdale, or Tel Aviv—Himmelfarb would have found him in the end. He smiled philosophically to himself and waited for Itzie to break down the door. The doorknob stopped rattling. Faintly, almost inaudibly, he heard someone call his name. He knew now who was standing outside his room.

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Bernstein kept wheezing. "Who can climb steps anymore?" Misha unbuttoned the collar of Bernstein's shirt, brought him a glass of cognac, and then bolted the door. Bernstein was crying.

"Misha," he said, "Popkin refused us." He sought the safety of Misha's toilet seat. "Refused us. 'Popkin,' I said, 'take ten of the old and one of the new.' 'No,' he says. He changed his mind. He's no longer interested in Yiddish writers. Just like a whore. Now Mexican poets are in fashion. Misha, I begged him. 'Popkin, Popkin, take *The Man Who Grew Younger*, you can't go wrong. Let ten years go by and it will be a classic. Popkin, I'm giving you my guarantee.' Classics he doesn't need. Only Mexican writers." He stumbled across the room, narrowly missing the steam pipe and the Pepsi-Cola bottles, and finally found the toilet seat. "Misha, are you listening to me or not?"

"What, what?"

"The deal with Popkin is off. We can't even worm from him a cent. You, you're a lucky man. You still have Shaindele."

Misha's lips shaped an ironic smile. "No more Shaindele, she's finished."

Bernstein rocked his head in disbelief. "Misha, Misha, you gave up a goldmine. The woman is worth a fortune. Is this a Misha! Worse than a child. Misha, I mean it, without me you would be lost altogether. Forget about Shaindele! How will you handle Himmelfarb?" Bernstein, absorbed in Misha's sorrows, absently sucked his lip. "Misha, I have a plan. I'll take Shaindele off your hands. Sure, for you I'll make the sacrifice. You think that will satisfy Itzie, hah?" He drew his knees together and answered his own question. "What's the use, a *zhlub* like that, he'll fracture your head together with mine."

Bernstein clutched his chest; his lips turned ashen and his eyebrows twitched. "Misha," he mumbled, "Misha." Misha strode across the room and gripped Bernstein's hand. Then he stooped, lifted Bernstein gently, and brought him over to the bed. Bernstein's eyebrows stopped twitching. Misha cover-

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ed him with a blanket. "See," Bernstein said, raising his chest wearily, "see. If it's not the heart then it's the liver. Misha, maybe I should go home?"

"Stay."

"So where will you sleep?"

"The bed is big enough for two."

"Misha, you know me. I snore. And I talk all the time when I sleep. Misha, I'll rest here for a little while and then I'll go."

Misha arched one eyebrow belligerently. "Bernstein, you have to make such a big production out of staying in a bed. Go, do whatever you want. But remember, you won't find an escalator outside my door."

Bernstein envisioned himself tumbling down Misha's forty-nine steps, and his lips turned ashen again. "Misha, maybe you're right. I'll stay here tonight. Misha, why are you standing by the door? Are you expecting somebody?"

"I'm expecting Itzie."

"Itzie," Bernstein said. "I almost forgot." He pulled away the blanket. "Misha, let's stay better at my place."

"My place, your place. He'll find me just the same."

"Misha, maybe we should go to Mexico? I mean it."

Misha covered Bernstein again. "Go, sleep. You give me headaches with your speeches."

Bernstein sat glumly for a moment.

"Misha?"

"What?"

"Don't worry about Itzie. I'll talk to him. Itzie listens to me. 'Itzie,' I'll tell him, 'what's fair, is fair. There's no obligation on Misha's part. Where's the contract? The Rabbi was never called in. Misha never promised to marry her. But it's his misfortune. Itzie, believe me, Shaindele is better off. Misha's no bargain. The man never worked a day in his life. Let him *drai* someone else's *kop* with his poetry.' Misha, what do you think? He'll listen to me or not?"

Misha stood near the steam pipe. Bernstein kept counseling Itzie, Misha, and himself. "You'll see. All right, I'm not the Baal Shem, but I know how to talk. And if Itzie brings

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Shaindele with him, I'll take her over to the toilet seat and talk to her privately. 'Shaindele,' I'll say, 'live and laugh. You should be glad he's giving you your release...' "

Misha whirled his head suddenly. "Go to sleep."

Bernstein hid under the blanket.

"Misha?"

Misha raised his arms despairingly. "What, what?"

"What does he say, your man, your man who grows younger all the time. '*The world is a shithouse.*' The man is a lunatic, but honest to God, he's a hundred percent right. A shithouse!" Bernstein boldly clapped his knees. "Nobody, not Chekhov, not Tolstoy, not Babel, not Gogol, not Sholem Aleichem, nobody writes a story like Misha Dubrinoff."

Bernstein's chin dropped gently on his chest. He slept quietly.

Misha kept vigil near the toilet seat.

"Bastards," Bernstein cried out in his sleep, "bastards. Popkin, listen to me!"

Misha approached the bed. He gripped Bernstein's hand.

Bernstein opened one eye. "Misha," he said, "did he come yet, the *zhlub*?"

"No."

Bernstein's left eyebrow twitched. "Don't worry, Misha. I know how to handle him. Don't worry. You'll see. Itzie listens to me. Misha, should I run home and get my balalaika? My balalaika could bring over the devil to our side. Misha, you know it. Misha, you think he'll come? Maybe we should both run over to the Precinct. There we'll be safe. Misha, maybe he won't come. Maybe Shaindele forgot to tell him. Misha, what do you think, *hah*?"

"He'll be here. If not now, then later. If not today, then tomorrow. This I can guarantee."

Bernstein humped his back. "So what can we do? We'll wait."

They sat in the dark. Bernstein cursed Itzie and Popkin. Misha watched the door.

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# Another Night in the Ruins

1

In the evening
haze darkening on the hills,
purple
of the eternal, a last bird
crosses over, '*flop*, *flop*'
adoring
only the instant.

2

Nine years ago,
in a plane that rumbled all night
above the Atlantic,
I could see, lit up
by lightning-bolts jumping out of it,
a thunderbird
formed like the face
of my brother, looking nostalgically down
on blue,
lightning-fisted moments of the Atlantic.

3

Wind tears itself hollow
in the eave of my ruins, ghost-flute
of snowdrifts
that build out there in the dark,
upside down
ravines into which night sweeps
our torn wings, our ink-spattered feathers.

4

I listen.
I hear nothing. Only
the cow
of nothingness mooing, mooing
down the bones.

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5

Is that a
rooster? He
thrashes in the earth
for a grain. Finds
it. Rips
it into
flames. Flaps. Crows.
Flames
bursting out of his brow!

6

How many
nights must it take each one such as me to learn
that we aren't, after all, made
of the bits of that bird
which creates itself again
in its ashes,
that for a man
as he goes up in flames his one work
is to open himself, to *be*
the flames?

—GALWAY KINNELL

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# *Blaise Cendrars*

## An Interview and Selected Writings

*Blaise Cendrars (real name Frédéric Sauser) was born in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, in 1887. His father, an inventor-businessman, was Swiss, his mother Scottish. He spent his childhood in Alexandria, Naples, Brindisi, Neuchâtel, and numerous other places, while accompanying his father, who endlessly pursued business schemes, none successfully.*

*At the age of fifteen, Cendrars left home to travel in Russia, Persia, China—and everywhere in between—while in the employ of a jewel merchant; he wrote about this apprenticeship several years later in his long poem,* Transsibérien. *He was in Paris before 1910, where he met Guillaume Apollinaire, leader of the tumultuous avant-garde world of arts and letters at that time. Cendrars then traveled to America, where he wrote his first long poem,* Pâques à New-York. *The* Transsibérien *(full title:* La Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France*) was published the next year. Both these poems were of some moment in shaping the "modern spirit," then in process of catalysis, as was his third and last long poem,* Le Panama ou Les Aventures de Mes Sept Oncles, *(1918), published in America in 1931 in a translation by John Dos Passos.*

*Cendrars lost his right arm in the First World War, while serving as a corporal in the Foreign Legion. He refused an artificial arm and prided himself thereafter on one-handed skill at shooting, fast driving, typing, brawling. He worked in films after the war, as a writer and assistant director and later as a film maker on his own, sometimes a millionaire, more often broke.*

*During the 1920's he published two long novels,* Moravagine *(1926) and* Les Confessions de Dan Yack *(1929), and on into the 1930's published a number of "novelized" biographies or volumes of extravagant reporting,*



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*such as* L'Or *(1925), based on the life of John August Sutter (published in America in 1926 as* Sutter's Gold*), and* Rhum *(1930), "reportage romancé" dealing with the life and trials of Jean Galmont, a misfired Cecil Rhodes of Guiana.*

La Belle Epoque *was the great age of discovery in arts and letters. Cendrars, very much of the epoch, was sketched by Caruso, painted by Léon Bakst, by Léger, by Modigliani, by Chagall; and in his turn helped discover Negro art, jazz, and the modern music of* Les Six. *He published in 1921, when director of the Editions de la Sirène, his* Anthologie Nègre*—the first volume of a projected three-volume series gleaned from his travels in Africa and South America; almost-completed manuscripts of volumes two and three were destroyed by the Germans during World War II. At La Sirène he also put out a new edition of Lautréamont, who had died in 1870 at the age of twenty-four, bringing him to the edge of surrealist deification. As an assistant to Abel Gance in the filming of* La Roue *(1921), he put together the montage of the running train, and suggested Arthur Hönegger as composer of background music. Hönegger's score for this passage became his famous* Pacific 231.

*In 1935 Cendrars discovered Henry Miller, with the first article on Miller's* Tropic of Cancer *(1934) to appear in France (in the review* Orbes*) and perhaps the first notice of importance anywhere: dated on New Year's Day, it opens with the liturgical formula for the Christmas Eve announcement that a Savior to us is born, but reads instead: "An American writer to us is born: Henry Miller, who has just written his first book, Henry Miller, who has just published his first book in Paris. A royal book, atrocious book, exactly the sort of book I love the best..." The author, he wrote, was a one-hundred per cent American and solid realist but "... in discovering Paris, in breathing Paris, in devouring Paris, he swallows in gulps, furiously, and eats, vomits, and pisses forth the city, adores and curses it ..." Plenty of Cendrars' discoveries didn't take; for example, Ferreira de Castro, Brazilian of Portuguese origin, whose masterwork Cendrars translated in 1938 under the title of* Forêt Vierge; *or for that matter a number of other literary and artistic discoveries brought from South America; or for that matter South America itself, which failed to impassion Paris. Cendrars went so constantly to South America from 1924 to 1936 (usually taking along his Alfa Romeo racing car, whose body had been designed by Georges Braque) that he pretended the Route Nationale No. 10 ran from his house in Tremblay-sur-Mauldre direct to Asunción, Paraguay.*

*His home base was always Paris, for several years in the Rue de Savoie, later, for many years, in the Avenue Montaigne, and in the country, his little house at Tremblay-sur-Mauldre (Seine-et-Oise), though he continued to*

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*travel extensively. He worked for a short while in Hollywood in 1936, at the time of the filming of* Sutter's Gold.

*During the early months of World War II Cendrars was a war correspondent attached to the British armies, but with the fall of France in 1940 he retired to Aix-en-Provence (while his house at Tremblay was pillaged by the Germans). He stopped writing until 1944 when he began the series of reflective reminiscences,* L'Homme Foudroyé *(1945),* La Main Coupée *(1946),* Bourlinguer *(1948),* Le Lotissement du Ciel *(1949), that constitute his best and most important work. His last major work was published in 1957, entitled* Trop, C'est Trop. *He was disabled with illness soon afterward and died in January, 1961, in Paris.*

*The following interview combines Cendrars' reflections on his own work with reminiscences of the writers and artists whom he knew. It is selected from a series of radio interviews with Michel Manoll, broadcast from October to December 1950, and later published as* Blaise Cendrars Vous Parle *by Editions Denoël, to whom we are grateful for permission to reprint. Our gratitude is also expressed to New Directions, which has allowed us to use some of Cendrars' poetry for which they control the American rights.*

—WILLIAM BRANDON

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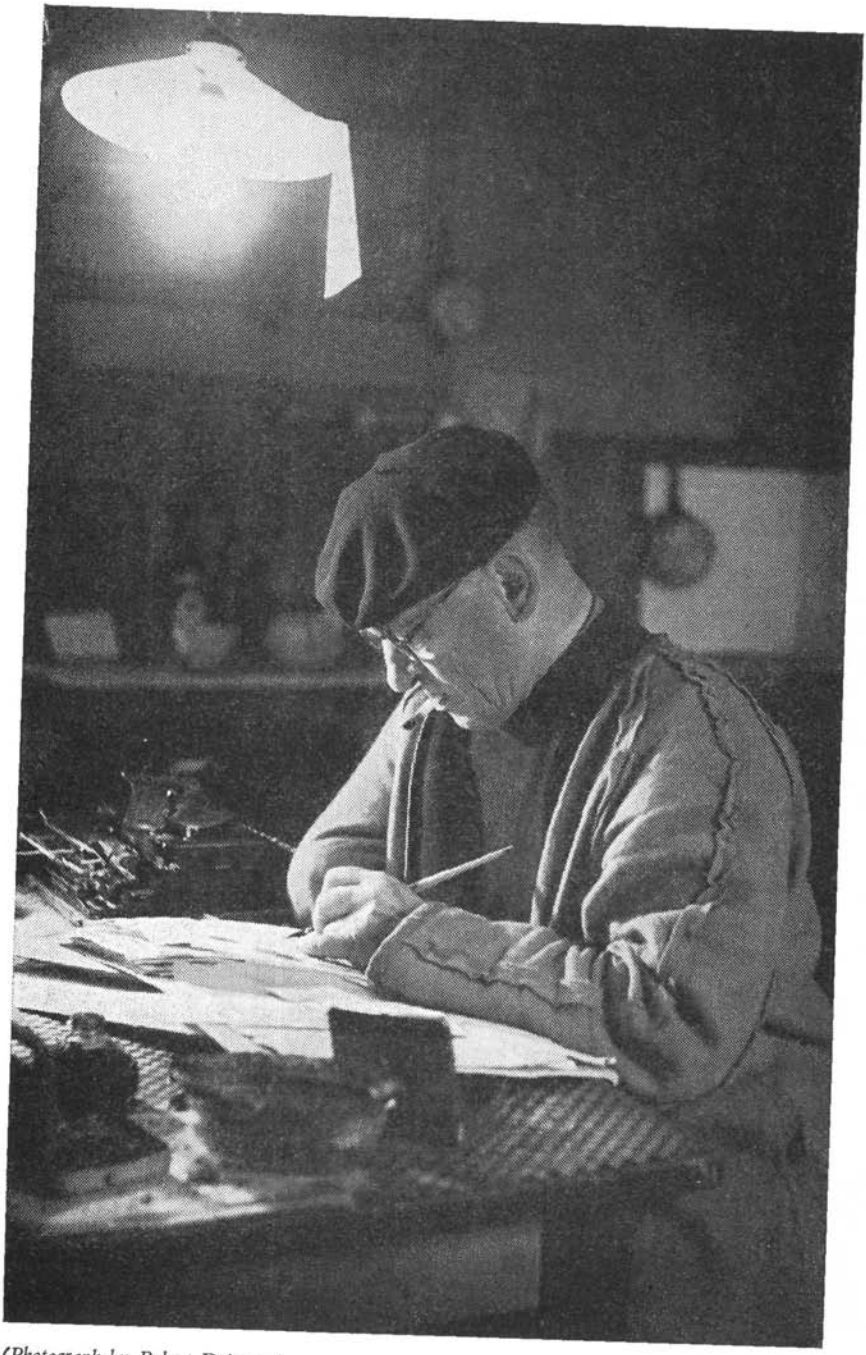

*(Photograph by Robert Doisneau)*

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INTERVIEWER

All writers complain of the constraint under which they work and of the difficulty of writing.

CENDRARS

To make themselves sound interesting, and they exaggerate. They should talk a little more about their privileges and how lucky they are to be able to earn some return from the practice of their art, a practice I personally detest, it's true, but which is all the same a noble privilege compared with the lot of most people, who live like parts of a machine, who live only to keep the gears of society pointlessly turning... I pity them with all my heart. Since my return to Paris I have been saddened as never before by the anonymous crowd I see from my windows engulfing itself in the Metro or pouring out of the Metro at fixed hours. Truly, that isn't a life. It isn't human. It must come to a stop. It's slavery...not only for the humble and poor, but the absurdity of life in general.

When a simple character like myself, who has faith in modern life, who admires all these pretty factories, all these ingenious machines, stops to think about where it's all leading, he can't help but condemn it because, really, it's not exactly encouraging.

INTERVIEWER

And your work habits? You've said somewhere that you get up at dawn and work for several hours.

CENDRARS

I never forget that work is a curse—which is why I've never made it a habit. Certainly, to be like everyone else, lately I've wanted to work regularly from a given hour to a given hour; I'm over 55 and I wanted to produce four books in a row. That finished, I had enough on my back. I have no method of work. I've tried one, it worked, but that's no reason to fix on it for the rest of my life. One has other things to do in life aside from writing books.

A writer should never install himself before a panorama, however grandiose it may be... Like Saint Jerome, a writer should work in his cell. Turn the back. Writing is a view of the spirit... "The world is my representation." Humanity lives in its fiction. This is why a conqueror always wants to transform the face of the world into his image. Today, I even veil the mirrors.

The workroom of Rémy de Gourmont was on a court, 71 rue des

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Saints Pères, in Paris. At 202 Boulevard Saint Germain, Guillaume Apollinaire, who had a vast apartment with large rooms and with a belvedere and terrace on the roof, wrote by preference in his kitchen, at a little card table where he was very uncomfortable, having had to shrink this little table even smaller in order to succeed in sliding it under a bulls-eye window in the mansard, which was also on a court. Edouard Peisson, who has a nice little house in the hills near Aix-en-Provence, does not work in one of the front rooms where he could enjoy a beautiful view of the valley and the play of light in the distance, but has had a little library corner constructed in back, the window of which gives on an embankment bordered with lilacs. And myself, in the country, in my house at Tremblay-sur-Mauldre, I've never worked on the upper floor which looks out on the orchards but in the lower room which looks in one direction on an impasse behind a stable and in another on a wall which encloses my garden.

Among the very few writers I've had occasion to see much of, only one man of letters, celebrated for his frenetic cult of Napoleon, installed himself before a panorama to work—a historical one—the window of his study had a full view of the Arc de Triomphe. But this window was most often closed because the living spectacle of the glory of his great man, far from inspiring him, clipped his wings. He could be heard through the door coming and going in his study, beating his sides, roaring his phrases, trying out phrases and cadences, groaning, weeping, laboring himself sick like Flaubert in his "*gueuloir.*" His wife then said to the servants, "Pay no attention. It is Monsieur castigating his style."

INTERVIEWER

You say that there are other things in life to do beside writing books, but you are, all the same, an extraordinary worker.

CENDRARS

It's you others who are extraordinary! You all want us to write books without ever stopping. Where does that lead? Tell me... go take a walk through the Bibliothèque Nationale and you will see where that leads, that route. A cemetery. A submerged continent. Millions of volumes delivered over to the worms. No one knows any longer whose they are. No one ever asks. Terra incognita. It's rather discouraging...

No, I'm not an extraordinary worker, I'm an extraordinary daydreamer. I exceed all my fantasies—even that of writing.

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INTERVIEWER

You have read much during your life?

CENDRARS

Read enormously... It's my passion... Everywhere, in all circumstances and all sorts of books. Everything that falls under my hand, I devour...

INTERVIEWER

Reading isn't for you, you've said, a means of traveling, in time or space, but a way of penetrating without great effort into the skin of a character.

CENDRARS

No, reading has been a drug for me—I drug myself on printer's ink!

INTERVIEWER

Will you cite some of the unusual reading you've done...

CENDRARS

Captain Lacroix ... is an old sailor and his books are a feast. I've never had the luck to meet him. I looked for him in Nantes, at Saint-Nazaire. I was told that he is in his eighties and that he doesn't want to give up. When he was no longer able to navigate, he became a marine insurer, and it appears that he doesn't hesitate to put on a deep-sea diving rig in order to see for himself the state of his hulls. At his age, admirable. I imagine that the winter nights seemed long to him by the fireplace, when the wind from the sea poured down on his village of the Loire-Inférieure and blew around in his chimney, and I suppose it was to kill time that this man, who has knocked about on all the Seven Seas and aboard all sorts of ships possible and imaginable, began to write books. These are thick books, strongly built, full of solid documentation, sometimes a little too heavy but nearly always fresh, thus never tedious, all the less so in that the old seaman even searches out reproductions of illustrated post cards and photos of joyous ports of call of his youth, and he recounts things as they happened, his experience and all that he has learned and all that he has seen from Cape Horn to the China Sea, from Tasmania to Ushant, speaking of everything, of lighthouses, currents, wind, reefs, tempests, crews, traffic, shipwrecks, fish and birds, celestial

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phenomena and maritime catastrophes, history, customs, nations, people of the sea, relating thousands of anecdotes intimate or dramatic, all his life of an honest seaman carried along by the very movement of the sea and dominated by his exclusive love of ships. Ah, it is, certainly, not the work of a littérateur. His pen is a marlinspike, and each page brings you something, and there are ten big volumes! It's as moving as it can be and as simple as good morning. In a word, miraculous. One touches the globe with a finger.

And there are the divinatory quatrains of Nostradamus, written in a magnificent language which is a joy to me, although they remain indecipherable. I have read them for forty years, I gargle with them, I regale myself with them, I enjoy them, but I don't understand them. I've never searched for the key, I've read nearly all the keys that have been published, they are meaningless and all false since every two or three years someone invents a new mechanism without being able to spring the lock. But, as a great French poet, Nostradamus is one of the greatest. Still another to stick in my *Anthologie de la poésie française* if I ever compile it. All his impromptu turns invented from a conventional language beat by far the looniness of Dada, and the automatic writing of the surrealists, and the decalcomania of Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*...

INTERVIEWER

What have you discovered since? What do you read at present?

CENDRARS

The latest book I've discovered is the great dictionary of the Customs Administration that we owe to an edict of Vincent Auriol, then Minister of Finance. It is entitled *Répertoire général du tarif* and appeared in 1937. Two volumes quarto. Weight 50 kilos. I take them everyplace with me because I'm going to need them some day soon when I begin to write *La Carissima*... the mystical life of Mary Magdalene, the only woman who made Christ weep.

INTERVIEWER

You need the Customs Tariffs in order to write that book?

CENDRARS

My dear sir, it's a matter of language. For several years, each time that I prepare to write a book, I first arrange the vocabulary I am going to employ. Thus, for *L'Homme Foudroyé*, I had a list of 3,000

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words arranged in advance, and I used all of them. That saved me a lot of time and gave a certain lightness to my work. It was the first time I used that system. I don't know how I happened onto it... it's a question of language. Language is a thing that seduced me. Language is a thing that perverted me. Language is a thing that formed me. Language is a thing that deformed me. That's why I am a poet, probably because I am very sensitive to the language—correct or incorrect, I wink at that. I ignore and despise grammar which is at the point of death, but I am a great reader of dictionaries and if my spelling is none too sure it's because I am too attentive to the pronunciation, this idiosyncrasy of the living language. In the beginning was not the word, but the phrase, a modulation. Listen to the songs of birds!

INTERVIEWER

Language, then, you would say, is not something dead, frozen, but something in motion, fugitive, attaching itself always to life and reality.

CENDRARS

That's why this great dictionary of the Administration of the Customs fascinates me. For example, take the word "ribbon." I discover with amazement all the significations that the word "ribbon" can represent and above all in its ultra-modern industrial usages: there are 21 pages!

INTERVIEWER

Where did your interest in folk literature begin?

CENDRARS

During all my life I have been profoundly influenced by the works of Gérard de Nerval. I owe to Gérard de Nerval my love of songs and of popular poetry, and in all the countries of the world I've made an effort to hear and note and read some of the music, poetry, literature of the people, notably in Russia, in China, in Brazil. Much Alexander Dumas is read, cloak and sword novels, love stories for typists—to a considerable degree all the stenographers of the world have the same mind. But there are also in every country some sorts of works which are *exclusively* reserved to the popular interest, such as *The Key of Dreams*, *The Language of the Flowers*, and a thousand others. If this sort of peddler's literature is perhaps a little out of date in Paris, in a country such as Brazil (which is a new country, every-

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thing seems new to it) entire levels of the population, who have barely learned to read, are discovering these stories of sorcery, of werewolves, of the headless mule, of the White Lady, of phantoms, of black humor, of romance, fairy tales, novels of chivalry, nursery tales, and adventures of highwaymen, celebrated crimes of passion; a collection of marvels that is no more stale and trashy for that matter than are, in much more advanced countries, the detective novels of England, the gangster stories of the United States, the grand love films in all the cinemas of the earth, which themselves also constitute a part of the old foundations of folklore, of popular literature.

INTERVIEWER

But in Brazil, isn't this folklore entirely borrowed from the Negroes?

CENDRARS

Not at all. The literary folklore is of Portuguese origin. The peddler's literature was imported from Portugal; it is by the way much more at the base of the national Brazilian literature than are the works of the Brazilian academicians who, for their part, were always more or less influenced, until most recent years, by academic French literature, as all the latest generation of young writers in Brazil is now influenced by the new North American novelists of between-the-wars, who were for the most part living in Paris and much in evidence here, at Saint-Germain-des-Prés and Montparnasse: Hemingway, John Dos Passos, Henry Miller.

INTERVIEWER

But the Negroes who had been transplanted, did they write?

CENDRARS

The transplanted Negroes, that is to say the slaves, did not write. It was forbidden for them to write and it was altogether exceptional that certain ones were able to learn to read or write. More than this, it was forbidden to print books in Brazil, all came from Portugal. The first printing press was not installed at Rio de Janeiro until 1818, under the Empire. Thus, the *Complete Poems* of Grégorio de Matos (1633–1696), who was called with good reason the François Villon of Brazil and whom his contemporaries named *boca da inferno*, so violent were his satires of colonial society, were not printed at Rio until 1882. Until that date they had been transmitted by oral tradition and manuscript copies which circulated in a certain class of society: the bohemians of Bahia.

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INTERVIEWER

He was a Negro?

CENDRARS

No, at most a very dark mixed-blood, a *pardo*, as they say there. His parents had a sugar cane plantation and owned 130 black slaves. He had had the good fortune of being sent to study law at Coimbra, the famous university of Portugal. When he came back to Bahia, his doomed mouth and his infernal invectives earned him a session of exile in Angola, Africa, from where he returned, more enraged than ever, to settle at Pernambuco, under house arrest. Far from mending his ways, he led a life of drunkenness and debauchery with the Negro girls of the port. All his love songs, and there are some very beautiful ones, celebrate the black Venus. He died in poverty. Tradition has it that he was buried, like the poorest of the poor, with his guitar, his only property.

INTERVIEWER

When you ran away from home, at the age of 15, had you planned your escape? Did you have an objective, or a hope of return?

CENDRARS

Do I know? I went East because the first train through the station carried me East; if it had been a train going West I would have gotten to Lisbon and I would have done America instead of Asia.

INTERVIEWER

This was an extremely important date in your life because, after this time, your life has been divided into two paths: your adventures in the Orient and your adventures in the West. Since that time you've never had a roof...

CENDRARS

Those are the things one says when one wants to tell stories, to put a little order into one's existence. But my life has never been cut in two. That would be too convenient: anyone can cut his life in two, in four, in eight, in twelve, in sixteen.

INTERVIEWER

I want to ask you why you haven't continued the experiment which you began with *Pâques à New York*, *Transsibérien*, and *Panama*. In these poems, particularly in *19 Poèmes Elastiques* which innovated a new poetic technique, there's a movement of stanzas which you've since abandoned.

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CENDRARS

In 1917 I had just written a poem which astounded me by its fullness, its modernity, by everything I'd put into it. It was so antipoetic! I was delighted. And at that moment I decided not to publish it, to let modern poetry get along without me, to see what would happen to it. I nailed this unpublished poem in a chest; I put the chest in an attic in the country, and I set myself a limit of ten years before I'd take it out to publish it. That's more than thirty years ago, and I believe the time has not yet come to publish it.

INTERVIEWER

This poem is *Au Cœur du Monde?*

CENDRARS

Yes, and although unpublished, it's famous. The other day an editor offered me a million (two thousand dollars) for it, but I didn't bite...

I told you the other day that I don't write any more poems. I make poems which I recite to myself, which I taste, which I play with. I feel no need to communicate them to anyone, even to people I like a lot... I don't write them down. It's so good to day-dream, to stammer around something which remains a secret for oneself. It's a sin of gluttony.

To write... it's an ungrateful profession; in all sincerity, one gets little satisfaction from it. It's quite exceptional to be able to say to oneself, that's not too bad, Blaise; it's even quite good. One gives oneself this satisfaction very, very, very rarely, because one thinks above all, when one has published a book, about all that one has failed to do, all that one hasn't put in it, all that one wanted to put in, all that one would add to be complete, because it's so difficult to hem things in with writing and to say everything with words. When the book is finished, one remains fatally disappointed.

INTERVIEWER

...Your own *Pâques à New-York*, the *Transsibérien*, *Panama*, the...

CENDRARS

Tell me, since when has anyone spoken of them?

INTERVIEWER

... The *19 Poèmes Elastiques* ... They are spoken of and cited precisely because these poems are at the base of modern poetry, are at the source of modern lyricism...

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CENDRARS

No no, not at all, I'm not at the base of anything at all. It is the modern world which is at the base, "enormous and delicate" like the Middle Ages. And the source, it's Villon. If one would ever publish the correspondence of Max Jacob you would find sources and bases and points of departure and of arrival. *There* was one who understood how to shake the coconut tree and bring tumbling down pellmell the false geniuses and the true ones, the pure and the impure! And he had as wicked a tongue as you'd want, and could stir up more trouble than the devil in holy water...

Poets don't seem to have fun any more. What troubles me more than anything else these days is to see the seriousness with which they approach everything...

INTERVIEWER

Were you gay because your life was brighter in the good old days?

CENDRARS

My dear sir, in the Belle Epoque space-writers were paid one sou a line in the papers and an Apollinaire had to wait months and years before he could sign his articles and count on steady employment with regular pay. That was why he published pornography, to earn his bread. You can't imagine how solidly closed all doors were to us. I have the impression that today you're much better received, I run into young writers everywhere, on the papers, the radio, in the picture studios. Before 1914 those who wanted a job stood in line at the door, or at an employment window that never opened. The others contented themselves with playing the buffoon, the wild bull, in the streets. To hell with a job and a decent living. We laughed. The Paris girls were pretty.

INTERVIEWER

This present generation hasn't been too bad at buffoonery.

CENDRARS

Everyone has a taste of it, it's the right of every young generation. Fortunately the wild bull still exists and hasn't been put in cans for exportation as corned beef. One counsel: when you see an open door, newspaper, radio studio, cinema, bank, anything—don't enter. By the time you're thirty you'll be nuts because you left your laugh at the

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door. That's my experience. Poetry is in the street. It goes arm in arm with laughter. They take each other along for a drink, at the source, in the neighborhood bistros, where the laugh of the people is so flavorsome and the language which flows from their lips so beautiful. "Il n'est bon bec que de Paris."

INTERVIEWER

In 1912, you were in New York...

CENDRARS

In 1912, at Easter, I was starving in New York, and had been for a number of months. From time to time I took a job, by force of necessity, but I didn't keep it a week and if I could manage to get my pay sooner than that I quit sooner, impatient to get on with my sessions of reading at the central Public Library. My poverty was extreme and every day I looked worse, unshaven, trousers in corkscrews, shoes worn out, hair long, coat stained and faded and without buttons, no hat or tie having sold them one day for a penny in order to buy a plug of the world's worst chewing tobacco. Time passed. Came Easter. Easter Sunday the library was closed. In the evening I entered a Presbyterian church which was giving an oratorio, Haydn's *Creation*, so said a lighted sign hung to the spire. In the church there was a scattered audience and, on a stage, fashionable young girls who played ancient instruments and sang divinely well. But a wretched bishop interrupted the oratorio every five minutes to preach I-know-not-what pious sanctimony and make an appeal to the good hearts of the faithful and, when the oratorio continued, another croaker of a preacher as tiresome as the first entered the stall where I had taken a place, and tried to convert me by surreptitious exhortation, all the time thumping my money-pocket in an effort to draw out a dollar or two for expenses, shaking his leather money-plate under my nose. Poor me! I left before the end and walked home to West 67th street where I was living, absolutely disgusted and dead beat. It could have been two or three o'clock in the morning. I gnawed a hunk of dry bread and drank a big glass of water. I went to bed. I went immediately to sleep. I woke up with a start. I began to write, to write. I went back to sleep. I woke up the second time with a start. I wrote until dawn and I went back to bed and back to sleep for good. I woke up at five o'clock that evening. I reread the thing. I had written *Les Pâques à New-York*.

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INTERVIEWER

The whole thing?

CENDRARS

As it was published. There were three erasures.

INTERVIEWER

This manuscript, where is it now?

CENDRARS

The original, I don't know, I had to sell it one rainy day. But the friend of poets, the publisher Pierre Seghers, who devoted a little volume in his series of *Poètes d'aujourd'hui* to me in 1948, spoke to me of a copy of the manuscript, a copy which belongs today to Paul Eluard, if I'm not mistaken ... On landing in Paris, I remember having deposited this copy with Guillaume Apollinaire, who lived in Passy, Rue Gros, across from the gas works. Who sold it, or from whom could Paul Eluard have bought it, and when? I don't know, and I've never asked him, because I don't know Eluard. But Seghers, who had had this copy in his hands, asked me for precisions on the appearance of the manuscript and what I told him seemed to fit with what he had noticed, American paper, right-hand writing, etc. ...

INTERVIEWER

Your poem was published how many years after having been written?

CENDRARS

After writing it I had only one desire, to get out of New York, and I embarked within a week to return to Paris. I paid five dollars, some twenty-five francs. Imagine that at that time one could return from New York to Paris for twenty-five francs! It is true that it was a cattle boat. As soon as I arrived in Paris, I published my poem.

INTERVIEWER

Under what conditions? You had found a publisher?

CENDRARS

Not on your life! I found a printer, an anarchist who had a little clandestine press installed in a piano crate, at the Buttes-Chaumont, Rue Botzaris, Villa des Boers. I worked with him to earn a little money against the cost of the edition. I profited from the occasion

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to undergo my apprenticeship in typography. I composed more than half of the text myself. The little book was published with an ugly picture of me. The thing cost me something like a hundred francs. There were 125 copies published. I offered them for sale at twenty sous. I never sold one.

INTERVIEWER

Not a single one?

CENDRARS

No.

INTERVIEWER

What became of all these copies?

CENDRARS

Where does old paper go? I don't have a copy of that edition myself.

INTERVIEWER

That made you known among the poets?

CENDRARS

I was already known enough among poets to have mocked them and to have disturbed their assemblies at the Closerie des Lilas, at the Café Fleurus, at the Procope; and so I didn't need to publish something in order to be known by the poets. But to have published *Les Pâques à New-York*, in October 1912, brought me the enmity of the bonzes and the pontiffs who, the following year, when I published *Le Transsibérien*, "the first simultaneous book," in June 1913, called me an epigonus and accused me of plagiarism. It was not good to be a young authentic among all those old glories on the tail of Symbolism, who all took themselves for sacred bards. Beards, yes, which I laughed in. At that time, Apollinaire was the only poet that I went to see. He was always kind to me and he got work for me so I could make a few sous. Don't listen to the evil gossips! They say today that he was influenced by me, and I say I couldn't care less. I sang of the Eiffel Tower. He sang of the Eiffel Tower. And plenty of others have sung of it since...

INTERVIEWER

All the same it is an extremely mystifying thing, Apollinaire's change of poetic orientation after your meeting.

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CENDRARS

It was Jules Romains who first remarked this change of front. Me, I pay no attention. It's not my affair. It's critics who say that. This is not my job. I'm not equipped for it. I wrote about the Eiffel Tower when I felt like it...

INTERVIEWER

This doesn't have to do with the Eiffel Tower. This has to do with...

CENDRARS

With the influence I might have had on Guillaume Apollinaire. It was Robert Goffin who hung up this bell and there have been I don't know how many people come along to ring it, as if it's a crime to experience the influence of someone... I have, sometimes, the impression in regard to this alarm bell, that I'm not dealing with critics, with students of poetry, with historians, but with amateur detectives who measure, mark, take fingerprints...

INTERVIEWER

Is there always this long delay—of ten years or so—between the lived adventure and the moment of writing it, as in *Panama*?

CENDRARS

A very long incubation. There's a whole unconscious labor of bringing to a point that must be carried out. Generally I start off with a title. I first find the title. I generally find pretty good titles, people envy me for them, and not only envy me but quite a few writers come to see me to ask for a title. When I have my title, I give myself to reflection. Things pile up. A crystallization both conscious and unconscious is produced around the title and I write nothing solid as long as I don't know everything about my characters, from the day of their birth to the day of their death, and can't make them evolve in all circumstances possible and imaginable according to their character and their situations fictional or real. This can last for years. I take notes. In this way I build up dossiers stuffed with notes and sketches. They are imaginary and not factual. Factual documentation bothers me.

INTERVIEWER

You've spoken to me of your next novel, a "real novel."

CENDRARS

Yes, a real novel or it won't appear.

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INTERVIEWER

In any case, there'll be certain elements of your life in it?

CENDRARS

No, no, no, no, not at all, you won't find me in it, I shall write a novel-novel, and I won't appear in it, because they don't see but one character in all my books: Cendrars! *L'Or* is Cendrars; *Moravagine* is Cendrars; *Dan Yack* is Cendrars—I'm annoyed with this Cendrars! Anyway, one shouldn't believe that the novelist is incarnated in his characters—Flaubert isn't Madame Bovary. It didn't do him any good to get sick when he described the poisoning of Emma... he still wasn't Madame Bovary, even though he believed he was, and said, "I am Madame Bovary!" That solid Norman an old aunt??? The greatest danger for a writer is to fall victim to his own legend, to fall into his own trap.

INTERVIEWER

You've announced 33 forthcoming books. Why 33?

CENDRARS

The list of 33 books which I've been announcing for forty years is not exclusive, restrictive or prohibitive; the number 33 is the key figure of activity, of life. So this is not at all a black list. If it has an index, it is not a putting on The Index. It doesn't include the titles of novels which I will never write—the other day I was surprised to discover that *La main coupée*, which I published in 1948, had been on this list since 1919. I had completely forgotten that! On the list are books which I will take up again and which will appear in the future. Also listed are the ten volumes of *Notre pain quotidien*, which are written but which I left in various strong boxes in South American banks and which, God willing, will be found by chance some day—the papers aren't signed, and are left under a false name. I've also listed a group of poems which I value more than my eyes but which I haven't decided to publish— not by timidity or pride, but for love... And then, there are the books that were written, ready for publication, but which I burned to the great detriment of my publishers: for example, *La vie et la mort du soldat inconnu* (5 volumes). Finally, there are the bastards, the larvae, and the abortions which I will probably never write.

INTERVIEWER

John Dos Passos consecrated a chapter to you in *Orient Express* and he called you the Homer of the Transsibérien...

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CENDRARS

When John was married, I was in the Périgord. I was in the process of hatching my book on Galmont. He came on his honeymoon directly from New York to Monpazier, of which Galmont was a native. Monpazier is a historic little city. It's a fortified village built by the kings of England, that dates from 1426. It's very small, 625 inhabitants at most. It's laid out like an American city. There are two principal arteries and all the cross streets cross these two principal arteries at right angles. One could number them as in America, I think there are twenty-one. I was staying in the best hotel in the vicinity, the Hotel de Londres, where one eats like a god. It's kept by Madame Cassagnol—her husband is a double for Charlie Chaplin. Madame Cassagnol wears a mustache and the pants of the household. When John Dos Passos told me he was coming, I said to Madame Cassagnol: "I have some friends who are arriving directly from New York to stay here with you. Try to distinguish yourself." And I didn't give another thought to either the menu or the wine. For a week Madame Cassagnol fed us on that good Périgourdine cuisine, setting up the menus herself, progressively, giving us a surprise each day: truffles, pot-au-feu with garlic to make you sop up your plate—with a little wine, country style; buisson d'écrevisses, champignons à la crème, boletus mushrooms à la bordelaise, fried fish, fish of the Dordogne and of the Garonne, brochettes of little birds, woodcock à l'armagnac, game feathered and furred, poachers' venison of which the main supplier was the curé of a neighboring village, roasts, terrine de foie gras, wild lettuce, peasant cheeses, figs in honey and crushed nuts, pruneaux d'Agen, crèpes flambées, as much strong red wine as you wanted, a bottle of Monbazillac for two, coffee, liqueurs, all for 12 francs 50, plus 50 centimes extra for the surprise of the last day. The last day, the day of the departure of John and his wife, we ate a wild swan. I didn't even know there might still be wild swans in France, even in migration. What an astonishing country is the black Périgord!

I've seen John often, but always in Paris. It's curious, by the way, but never never never have I met one of my friends among American writers in the United States, as often as I've gone there. They are never home, as if by chance, and if I've insisted I've been told over the phone that the master for whom I was asking was on vacation, or on a tour, or in Europe. I've tried in vain to find one at his newspaper, his club, or at his publisher's. The response was the same everywhere: "He isn't here!" I used to hang up the phone with a bizarre feeling. I don't want to draw from it any conclusion disparaging to

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anyone but I finished by admitting to myself that American writers are not free in their country and that those who come back from Europe don't have an easy conscience, reproaching themselves with little frolics painful to recall. They have a fear of public opinion and, contrary to the English, don't even have a bread-and-butter courtesy. It's a typically American complex.

INTERVIEWER

Among American writers you know Henry Miller, he is one of your great friends?

CENDRARS

Henry Miller, I've seen him in Paris and I've never seen him anywhere else but in Paris. He was gay, joyous companion.

INTERVIEWER

You know still others?

CENDRARS

Yes, surely, crowds, crowds of poets, who have come, who have gone away; I've forgotten their names, so numerous were they in Paris on the eve of the last war.

INTERVIEWER

It is claimed that you have served them as a model and that you have strongly influenced certain American novelists.

CENDRARS

That's absolutely false. If I've been able to influence this one or that without my or his knowledge, I haven't served as a model. It's Victor Hugo, it's Maupassant who served as models for them when they came to establish themselves in Paris at the end of the other war. They came to France without an afterthought, be it as soldiers, ambulance drivers, diplomats; the war over, they sojourned for a time, short or long, in Paris, where certain ones stayed during the entire time between the two wars; they frequented Montparnasse, then Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and if they were influenced it was rather by the ambiance, the air of Paris and the way of living in France rather than by this or that French author. John Dos Passos declared to me one day: "You have in France a literary genre that we don't know at all in the United States, the *grand reportage à la Victor Hugo*."

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INTERVIEWER

That's an astonishing statement.

CENDRARS

I was surprised by it because, like you, I believed reportage to be a strictly American genre. Well, it appears not. From the point of view of reportage, then, we have terribly influenced young American novelists, who didn't yet write for the great magazines and had a tendency to fortify themselves in their ivory tower in order to dedicate themselves to letters, to belles-lettres. Since then they've caught up with themselves, it's only necessary to read the latest war reporting or other reporting by a Seabrook, a Hemingway, a John Dos Passos himself, which bear our imprint and which are marvelous. They have renewed the genre. *Asylum* by Seabrook is a masterpiece of reportage as *La mort de Balzac* of Victor Hugo's is another and the first model of the genre. Dos Passos was right.

INTERVIEWER

And Faulkner, you know him?

CENDRARS

No, I don't know Faulkner. I've never met him. Malraux asked me to do a preface for the translation of *Light in August;* I didn't want to do it, finding it too regional, too literary and written as one doesn't write any more, too well...

INTERVIEWER

Was it in New York that you met Hemingway?

CENDRARS

No, at the Closerie des Lilas in Paris. I was drinking; he was drinking at a table next to mine. He was with an American sailor on leave. He was in uniform—probably that of a non-combatant ambulance aide, unless I'm mistaken. It was at the end of that other war, the "last of the last." We talked between tables; drunks like to talk. We talked. We drank. We drank again. I had an appointment in Montmartre, at the widow of André Dupont, a poet killed at Verdun. I went there every Friday to eat bouillabaisse with Satie, Georges Auric, Paul Lombard, and sometimes Max Jacob. I brought my boozer American friends with me, I thought I'd give them something good *de chez nous* to eat.

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But the Americans aren't fond of good food; they have no good food at home, they don't know what it is. Hemingway and his sailor didn't care for my arguments—they preferred to drink until they weren't thirsty any more. So I planted them in a bar on the rue des Martyrs, and I ran to treat myself at my friend's widow's house.

INTERVIEWER

You knew Sinclair Lewis, too?

CENDRARS

Yes, that's another story... it was in 1930, in Rome. He'd already been widely discussed in Italy, where he was trailing about with a squadron of jolly New York girls who were causing a scandal. One fine day he landed in Rome, where I was making a movie. He let me know that he urgently wanted to meet me. I asked him to come to the studio, but he answered that he had a cold, he didn't like movies, and anyway he didn't have the time because he was leaving the next morning for Stockholm to collect the Nobel Prize. I didn't have the time either, I was busy working, but there was a breakdown at the studio around ten o'clock so I went to his hotel, where I found half a dozen American girls completely drunk, making a gigantic cocktail in a soup tureen full of whipped cream, into which—while quarreling with each other about how much to put in—they were pouring two, three litres of vermouth. I didn't think I could join this scene of mad women right away—one of them held out some scissors to me and dared me to cut her hair—so I thought I'd take a little stroll. But I changed my mind and decided to search the apartment for the master of the séance whom I hadn't seen yet. The door of the bathroom was half open, and boiling water was coming out. I went in. The bathtub was overflowing and the faucets were wide open. Two feet, dressed in polished dancing pumps, hung out of the tub, and at the bottom a man in a tuxedo was drowning. It was my Sinclair Lewis. I pulled him out of his unfortunate position, and that was how I saved his life so he could take the train the next morning for Stockholm and his prize.

The next day I put him on the train—he didn't even buy me a drink. It's true he had a hangover and probably didn't want to drink, or maybe he'd sworn never to drink again. But a drunk's oaths don't hold, you know...

INTERVIEWER

... And where did you live in Paris when you came back from America in 1912?

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CENDRARS

Avenue Montaigne. It's a wonderful quarter and I know it well. I've lived at numbers 12, 60, 51, 33, 5, and finally I went back to 12. I could write a book on this quarter, apparently so tranquil, comfortable even, and where plenty takes place, but plenty! I'd even found a title for the book: *Voyage autour de l'Alma.* But I'll probably never write it, like so many other books I've daydreamed about during the years...

INTERVIEWER

What is your best memory of that neighborhood?

CENDRARS

I don't know, I have too many. It's there that the rat terriers are trained by my good friends the sewer-workers of the City of Paris, in a subterranean ratodrome. Also there was a streetsweeper-Don Juan who bowled over all the housemaids along the avenue and used to lock himself up with them in the interior of a Morris column, where he had installed a red velvet pouf. It was just in front of the Brazilian Embassy, where I would end the night drinking *cafesinhos*, smoking cigars, and talking away like a madman with dear old Souza-Dantas, called the Bohemian Ambassador because he didn't have a bed—when he was sleepy he turned up his collar, pulled a hat down on his head and stretched himself out on a Russian leather canapé, closed his eyes and slept like a baby, without caring whether you had left or not.

I even wrote a little book in 1913 on Russian music for the inauguration of the Grand-Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, and the evening of the première of *Petrouchka*, a woman covered with diamonds, driven mad by the music of Stravinsky, tore loose a brand new theater seat in order to break it over my head, which she did so well that I passed the rest of the night drinking champagne in Montmartre with Stravinsky, Diaghilev, and some of the dancers of the Ballet Russe, wearing this seat like a collar and my face streaked with blood and scratches. I've seen the quarter evolve, the grand couturiers—from Madeleine Vionnet to Boyd—come to establish themselves there ... taxis replace the fiacres... Jouvet open the Comédie, Batbedat the Studio, Hébertot turn the Salle de Perret—which had been built to produce Parsifal when the Richard Wagner opera should enter the public domain and have it all over Bayreuth, with the aid of steam-making machinery installed under the stage at a cost of millions and

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which has never been used—into a music hall of grand luxe where all high-style Paris came running, to say nothing of the Swedish Ballets of Rolf de Maré who mounted my Negro ballet, *La Création du Monde*, with music by Darius Milhaud and décors by Fernand Léger, *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel* of Cocteau, *Relâche* by Eric Satie, for which I had written the argument for old Satie and Francis Picabia swiped the idea of it from me, the subject and the cinematic interlude of *Entre-Acte*, thanks to which René Clair was able to make his debut as a director, Picabia having profited by the fact that I had gone to Brazil. You see, it was quite an epoch...

INTERVIEWER

Among the strange people you've liked, which ones have you found in Paris?

CENDRARS

The strangest being I came across on the Avenue Montaigne was the mad woman from whom Giraudoux drew his *Madwoman of Chaillot*. She wasn't the "brat with diamonds" in Montmartre as the newspapers of the period captioned a picture of her. Madame Leffray was an Englishwoman, the widow of a true cockney coachman. She lived on the rue Lauriston. I often followed her: every day she came from Chaillot to the Avenue Montaigne, where she sat on a bench facing the Hôtel Plaza-Athénée. She stayed there in an ecstasy, just like the actress Moreno, but much thinner; decked out in velvet hat with dirty ostrich feathers; dirty trinkets; a long dress full of holes and lace; a filthy ermine scarf of which nothing was left but the little black tails; wild high-heeled shoes; gloves; grotesque jewels; a lorgnette; a handbag dragging on the ground. Everyone in the neighborhood knew her and made fun of her. She was really insane; she never spoke to anyone and never answered questions. She had her dignity, was haughty, self-sufficient. It was there, sitting on that bench which no longer exists, that Giraudoux could have seen her as often as I, because Jean came to the neighborhood practically every day.

INTERVIEWER

What do you do when you're traveling? Do you write in your cabin on board or do you wait until you've returned?

CENDRARS

I like long sea voyages, and the unique life at sea, too much to ever

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dream of working. It's the apotheosis of idleness; a triumph—to do nothing while the deck rocks, the boat moves, the engines knock, the ocean rolls, the wind blows, the earth revolves with the heavens and the stars, and the entire universe rushes to open for you to pass. I'm never in a hurry to arrive, and I've tried dozens of times to seduce the captain into taking his boat elsewhere than the designated port. "There's no way, alas!" an old Dutchman told me. "For thirty years I've been making the trip between Rotterdam and Buenos Aires, as if I was the engineer of a train. Impossible to change anything, the route is set in advance, the timetable fixed, I must get there on such a day at such a time, it's outlined in advance by the company, who are masters after God. But the most annoying thing is that it's always the same people who get on, always the same heads I'm obliged to have at my table—the same chargés d'affaires, the same diplomats, the same nabobs, the same big bankers. After thirty years, I know them too well! If only I had the courage to follow your infernal ideas, swing the helm and point elsewhere, to the East or the West, no matter... pass the Cape, dive into the southern seas...."

All that to tell you that on board, I don't write.

INTERVIEWER

Haven't you said that you fortify yourself in love and solitude?

CENDRARS

In truth, artists live alongside, on the margin of life and of humanity; that's why they're very great or very small.

INTERVIEWER

On the margin of humanity? You don't then consider yourself as an artist?

CENDRARS

No. I've already had thirty-six professions, and I'm ready to start something entirely different tomorrow morning.

INTERVIEWER

You've never had trouble earning your living. During the occupation, you lived for the most part on the sale of herbs and plants which you grew in your garden at Aix-en-Provence.

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CENDRARS

Some green plants, some medicinal plants.

INTERVIEWER

You're interested in bees?

CENDRARS

I'm interested in bees because they make me a lot of money, I wouldn't have Maeterlinck's interest—to study the habits of bees and draw absurd moral conclusions applicable to man. One meets thousands of similar people throughout the world, who study the lives of bees or ants passionately and then cite their social organization as an example, entirely wrongly I think, because insects have no ethics or sense of justice. I made honey because it was easy work, well paid. All you need are good customers.

INTERVIEWER

You've said that unlike many writers, you didn't go to war to write, that at that time you were a soldier, you had a gun...

CENDRARS

That's why I've never been one of those writer-soldiers. One is a fighter or one is a writer. When one writes, one isn't shooting, and when one's shooting one isn't writing, one writes afterwards. One would have done better to write before and prevent all that.

INTERVIEWER

And what do you think of Jean-Paul Sartre?

CENDRARS

I have no opinion of him, Sartre doesn't send me his books. Existentialism? As for its philosophical doctrine, it was Schopenhauer who put us on guard against the professors of philosophy who, after completing the official course of studies, meditate, write, think, draw up manifestoes—and Sartre is a professor. Philosophical plays are boring in the theatre, and Sartre displays his theses on the stage. The novels of the school are well written or badly written, those of Sartre are neither one nor the other. The young writers today—I've seen a great deal of them since my return to Paris and I ask myself where and in what they are specifically existentialist? Is it because they disguise themselves each evening to go to Saint-Germain-des-Prés the

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way their fathers dressed up each evening to go out in society or to their club? It's a fashion which will pass, which has already passed... I don't get carried away by the noise of a parade. But the world gets bored with itself. The cinema, radio, television... The truth is, few enough people know how to live and those who accept life as it is are still more rare.

INTERVIEWER

I don't know what can be said exactly of this invasion of literature by the professors, but one thing certain is that Jean-Paul Sartre's movement hasn't produced any poets. It's not made up of poets. No poet has come out of it.

CENDRARS

You're probably right. For the surrealists, I would make a single exception: Robert Desnos. Robert was a good guy and very sharp indeed. I've laughed much and drank much with him in a bar where we used to meet and which I baptized l'Œil de Paris because it was in the rue de Rivoli, under the arcades, a couple of steps from the Concorde and where you could see all Paris pass by without moving from your table, and that Robert maliciously named Chez Madame Zyeux because of the ladies who came in to go down to the toilet and came back out eyes strictly front so as not to ruffle their dignity by admitting they had been to piss.

INTERVIEWER

You've said that you envy Mayakovsky because of the illuminated sign board he had charge of over Red Square in Moscow.

CENDRARS

I don't know any other poet anywhere who had the luck and the opportunity to use an illuminated newspaper to publish—or rather, stick up—his poems in the street. It wasn't advertising or propaganda. Perhaps part of it, yes, simple propaganda of a party member, but Mayakovsky had too great a love of the people and of poetry. Think of the millions of illiterates there were in Russia. Nothing less than the genius of a Mayakovsky could stir such a crowd. And that's where I envy Mayakovsky—his poems weren't spoken, his poems weren't written, they were designed. Even illiterates can understand drawings. I can only compare him with Walt Disney, who is also a fine inventor, perhaps less pure, and the greatest poet in America,

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although commercialized. I'm sure that today Mayakovsky would shout his poems in Red Square over a loudspeaker, and that he'd improvise them every night on the radio in order that they might be heard in every corner of the world—more and more new poems, revolutionary in form and spirit.

—MICHEL MANOLL
*(Translated by William Brandon)*

**—Selected from *Blaise Cendrars Vous Parle*, Vol. 8 of The Complete Works of Blaise Cendrars, Copyright by Editions Denoël, 1952.**

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# Manolo Secca

## Blaise Cendrars

I am surprised that no novelist of today has yet devoted a work to the automobile, to the modern highway, to roadside inns, to gallant adventures of the road such as Casanova celebrated in his *Memoires*, which were full of post-chaises and hostelries familiar to travelers at the end of the Eighteenth century; or as George Borrow in *The Bible in Spain* wrote of adventures and encounters along the road in Spain at the beginning of the Twentieth century (a little in the manner of *L'Intinéraire Espagnol* of t'Sterstevens, except that Borrow hadn't gone to Spain to write a book—that would never have occurred to him—but to distribute the book of books, the Bible, in Spain, and particularly to distribute it—queer idea!—to the gypsies). I am surprised that no poet of today has yet sung of the automobile as I sang of the railway in the *Transsibérien* on the eve of that other war. (Happily, aviators, captivated by their novel and dangerous trade, have written about it, bringing the airplane most naturally, not simply as a theme but quite naturally, into literature and poetry; but I very much fear that the auto will not gain any such place, for the Michelin Guide is certainly not—is it?—something that will make our grand-nephews understand what a discovery the car and the highway was for us, and understand the changes wrought thereby in our conduct and our clandestine morals). I am surprised that among these gentlemen, the painters of today, there is not one such as Constantin Guys, who in his day left us unique documents on the elegance of ladies and carriages in the Bois.



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He was also a correspondent-illustrator of war in the Crimea and the revolution in Spain—he was a Monsieur, I take my hat off to him. Not one of these gentlemen, the painters of today, however affluent, has deigned to sketch the elegants of our epoch (to say nothing of war or of revolution) and their sumptuous motor cars that serve them as jewel-settings. I except the poster-makers whose works are in the street, but which a later day will collect in museums since it is in the ephemera of a period that posterity finds the living art. I will say nothing of the musicians of today. It is sufficient to turn the dial of your radio to realize how deep asleep in the lifeless past are so many of our composers, when a notch further on—why do I say a notch, the thickness of a hair will do—the same dial will bring pouring over you the jubilant and living sonorities and the exalted and consternating rhythms of American jazz which will tear you out of your chair... What are they all doing, these artists, my contemporaries? My word, you would think they had never lived! And yet there is only one thing in the world sublime for a creator: man and his habitat. God gave us the example when he came and lived among us; but they, seemingly they've never even taken a taxi...

Yes, the cars. In Brazil when I went, I only filled my tanks at Manolo Secca's pump on the way into the jungle; but on returning I stopped for a week with him, plunged myself into a barrel of oil in order to rid myself of vermin: carapates, lice, chiggers, the eggs and larvae of all sorts that you find clinging to your skin and digging under your skin when you come out of the bush and the swamps, out of the ocean of grass; then I filled the tanks again with gas and went on. I don't think I'll ever go back there, but I will never forget Manolo Secca, who is a saint. I write to him regularly. I send him picture post cards, the photos of the saints of our cathedrals and everything I can find that is sensational and exciting in the way of colored pictures of luxury automobiles, because he doesn't see three cars a year pass by his place. Manolo never answers; he can neither read nor write. This

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is of no importance. I write all the same. I know the old man prays for me; he was old and it was years ago, but I know Manolo Secca isn't dead. I feel it, and continue to write to him...

When you come at last onto the cleared road, you see a gas pump. What emotion! The first one! But it is also the sole and unique gas pump in the world surmounted by a cross. And good Manolo is there, like a hermit, smiling at you and saying nothing...

Manolo Secca is a Spanish Negro, a native of Cuba, where he was in the war against the United States and where he left a leg, his left leg. I don't know what vow brought him to tend that gas pump in the farthest fastnesses of the immensity of Brazil. I never asked him and probably if I had asked him he wouldn't have answered, because Manolo Secca was taciturn and never volunteered any information. All day long for years and years and years since he has been there, at the frontier of the possible world, at the frontier of the deserted world that takes two weeks to cross by auto, he carves statues in logs of wood that he saws up himself, white statues and black statues, according to which wood he chooses, wood of *caju* or rosewood; life-size figures in tiny automobiles, so tiny that each person has his own. He labors on a dozen works at one time dispersed in a circle around the gas pump, and while I stayed with him I counted exactly 308 personages, of which some were finished and others barely begun. They are disposed in the twelve stations of the cross. The scene representing the arrest of Christ in the Garden of Olives is composed of forty persons, each standing up in his tiny automobile.

There are only two exceptions: Pontius Pilate washing his hands was not washing them in a basin, but he was standing in the uniform of an admiral on an ironclad boat flying American colors and washing his hands by letting them hang directly in the sea; and for the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, Our Lord, as it is classic to represent him, rode an ass; but all the other persons present, the disciples and the people, were each standing up in a little automobile, and on the gate

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of Jerusalem was carved awkwardly by knifeblade a word that I thought looked like XAXAZE, but was probably GARAGE. One curious thing, all these ridiculous tiny cars were closed cars and the figures were all standing on their roofs. Manolo Secca marveled at my open car, my sports car of a model then called a "torpedo," and he took its measurements and promised to make my statue standing up in my car-life size and place it before the gas pump. "You have opened my eyes," he said in his lisping voice. I have no doubt that the old man kept his word and perhaps that out of the fullness of his heart he sculptured me in *caju*, because in parting I had told him to make me in black, in black wood. On that, he blessed me. I have neglected to say that Manolo Secca passed his nights in prayer. Apart from that, he rarely opened his mouth. But he smiled continually, continually, as he worked without stopping.

*(from L'Homme Foudroyé; Rhapsodies Gitanes; Les Couteaux)*

*Translated by William Brandon*

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# *Cendrars: Eleven Poems*

## THE HEAD

The guillotine is the masterpiece of plastic art
Its click
Creates perpetual motion
Everyone knows about Christopher Columbus' egg
Which was a flat egg, a fixed egg, the egg of an inventor
Archipenko's sculpture is the first ovoidal egg
Held in intense equilibrium
Like an immobile top
On its animated point
Speed
It throws off
Multicolored waves
Color zones
And turns in depth
Nude.
New.
Total.

## TELEGRAPH LINE

Down in the valley you see that telegraph line whose rectilinear path cuts through the forest on the mountain across the way
All the poles are made of iron
When they were put in they were made of wood
At the end of three months they grew branches
So they were pulled up turned over and replanted head down roots in the air
At the end of three months they grew new branches again they took root and began to live again
They had to be pulled up all of them and in order to reestablish a new line iron poles had to be brought in from Pittsburgh at great expense

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# PAPER

Christ
Here it's been more than a year since I thought of You
Since I wrote my next to last poem Easter
My life has changed a lot since
But I'm always the same
I've even wanted to become a painter
Here are the pictures I've done and which tonight hang from the walls
They open up strange views onto myself which make me think of You.

Christ
Life
That's what I've rummaged around in

My paintings make me sick
I'm too passionate
Everything is oranged up

I spent a sad day thinking about my friends
And reading the paper
Christ
Life crucified in the wide-open paper I hold at arm's length
Scopes
Bullets
Ferment
Cries.
You'd say a dropping airplane.
It's me.

Passion
Fire
Serial
Newspaper
One has a hard time not wanting to talk about one's self
You have to cry out sometimes

I am the other one
Too sensitive

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# LETTER

You said if you write me
Don't type everything
Add a line in your own hand
A word a nothing oh nothing much
Yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes

My Remington is beautiful nevertheless
I love it and we work well together
My writing is sharp and clear
You see very well that it's me that's typed it out

There are blanks that only I know how to make
So look at the eye my page has
Still to please you I add in ink
Two three words
And a big ink spot
So you can't read them

# WORK

Some very mean people have just blown up the bridge
The coaches caught fire at the bottom of the valley
The injured swim in the boiling water released by the disemboweled locomotive
Living torches flow among the debris and vapor jets
Other coaches stayed hanging 60 yards up
Men with flashlights and acetylene torches descend the trail down the valley
And the rescue is organized with a silent rapidity
Under the cover of rushes of reeds of willows the waterfowl make a pretty rustling
Dawn is long in coming
So that already a team of carpenters called by telegraph and come by a special train are busy rebuilding the bridge
Bang bang-bang
Pass me the nails

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# THE THOUSAND ISLANDS

Around here the countryside is one of the most beautiful in North America
The immense sheet of the lake is an almost white blue
Hundreds and hundreds of little green islands float on the calm surface of the clear water
The delicious cottages built in bright colored brick give this landscape the appearance of an enchanted kingdom
Luxurious maple mahagony rowboats elegantly decked out with flags and covered with multicolored tents come and go from one island to another
Any idea of tiredness of labor of misery is absent from this gracious millionaires' decor
The sun disappears on the horizon of Lake Ontario
The clouds bathe their folds in vats of purple violet scarlet and orange
What a beautiful evening murmur Andrea and Frederika seated on the terrace of a medieval castle
And the ten thousand motorboats reply to their ecstasy

# SUNSETS

Everybody talks about sunsets
All travelers agree about talking about sunsets in these latitudes
There are books filled with nothing but descriptions of sunsets
The tropical sunsets
Yes it's true they're splendid
But I really prefer the sunrises
Dawn
I never miss one
I'm always on the bridge
Jumping up and down
And I'm always alone admiring them
But I'm not going to describe them the dawns
I'm going to keep them for me alone

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# SPUTTERINGS

The rainbowesque dissonances of the Tower in its wireless
Noon
Midnight
Shit is said in all the corners of the universe

Sparks
Chrome yellow
We're in contact
The transatlantics approach from all shores
Go away
Every watch is set
And bells ring
*Paris-Midi* announces that a German professor was eaten by cannibals in the Congo
Well done
This evening *L'Intransigéant* published poems for post cards
It's stupid when all the astrologers burglarize the stars
You don't see any more there
I question the sky
The Meteorological Institute announces bad weather
There is no futurism
There is no simultaneity
Bodin burned every witch
There is nothing
There are no more horoscopes and you have to work
I'm upset
The Spirit
I'm going to take a trip
And I send this poem to my friend R...

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# LATEST NEWS

"Oklahoma, January 20, 1914"
Three prisoners get ahold of guns
They kill their jailer and grab the prison keys
They come running out of their cells and kill four guards in the courtyard
Then they grab the young prison secretary
And get into a stage which is waiting for them at the door
They leave at top speed
While guards fire their revolvers in the direction of the fugitives

A few guards jump on horses and ride in pursuit of the prisoners
Both sides exchange shots
The young girl is wounded by a shot fired by one of the guards

A bullet shoots down the horse pulling the stage
The guards can move in
They find the prisoners dead their bodies riddled with bullets
Mr. Thomas, former member of Congress who was visiting the prison
Congratulates the young girl

Copied telegram-poem in *Paris-Midi*

# WARMTH

I'm dying from the heat in my cabin and I can't air it out for fear of exposing my little family of little animals to the air current
Too bad
I'm staying in my cabin
I'm suffocating and I write I write
I write to please them
These little animals are very nice and me too

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# I TOLD YOU SO

I told you
When you buy monkeys
You have to take the ones that are very lively and who almost scare you
And never pick a sweet sleepy monkey that snuggles up in your arms
Because these monkeys are drugged and will be ferocious the next day
That's what just happened to a young girl who was bitten on the nose

*Translated from the French by Ron Padgett*

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# PICTURES FROM THE FIFTIES

*from The Paris Diary of*

## *NED ROREM*

*The following are excerpts from the diary kept by a young American composer while he was living in France and North Africa during the early Fifties. Insofar as there is a plot, it is self-portraiture, self-reckoning, but the elements are exceptional. The author is in his late twenties, gifted and good-looking, celebrated for both. Besides being an artist, he is an imaginative social climber, a very American Protestant, an earnest narcissist. He is also an intellectual, a hero-worshipper, and a lover—or more exactly, the sort of sensual man Montherlant must have had in mind when he said* "le corps fait trop l'âme pour qu'on doive s'excuser quand on parle de lui..."

*At the same time, he is a born watcher, with a keen sense of theater, and a rare gift of recollection. It is one thing to encounter Poulenc, Alice B. Toklas, Cocteau, Paul Eluard; it is another to be able to remember and record what they actually said, how they really looked. Ned Rorem gives us the kind of* choses vues *which make a diary not only a fishbowl but an aquarium; a self-revelation, but also a documentary—in this case, of how it was to live during those early Fifties which are still so near that they are hard to see, yet about which we already need as much first-hand evidence as we can get.*

—ROBERT PHELPS



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In New York I was already aware of both the lady and her attributes, and on leaving for France in the spring of 1949 was determined to know her. I arrived like any other Francophile tourist with intentions of spending one summer. But from the outset that insular nation contradictorally greeted me with open arms: within a month I knew and—so much more important!—was known by most of the musical milieu I have frequented since.

My first meeting with Marie Laure took place that fall at the opera. Eager Henri Hell presented us. I said: "How do you do?" She turned her back. Second encounter: the Méditerranée restaurant. She, to Sauguet: "*Je ne le trouve pas si beau que ça.*" Sauguet: "*Ah, non? Mais vous lui ressemblez beaucoup, chère amie.*" Third time, *chez* Madame Bousquet. Me: "I'm writing a ballet on your *Melos* scenario for the Biarritz contest." She: "We'll see that you win it." And again turned her back.

After interludes in Morocco and Italy I returned to Paris for another siege early in '51. Then occurred my first contacts with Cocteau, Green, Marie Blanche de Polignac, etc. But the Vicomtesse remained *insaissable*. One afternoon I learned she was to attend, that evening, a performance of *Yes Is For a Very Young Man*. I went too, alone, in a black turtle-neck sweater. I approached her and her companion, Charles Lovett, and we adjourned to the latter's apartment. Marie Laure was simultaneously cool, coy, and cultured; I played the ingenuous American. She invited me to lunch the next day, to various events the following week, painted my two portraits (one pale blue as a *voyou*, the other dark green as a Satie student), and I felt I was *in*. A fortnight later we were to leave at dawn with Labisse for a month at Hyères. When I arrived for the departure at her house, 11 Place des Etats-Unis, they'd already left. This was the first of her endless "tests." So I got drunk with Boris Kochno (who was also to have gone) and we telegraphed to Hyères. (Such abject persistance has, hopefully, long since quit me: it's the prerogative of *le jeune arriviste*.) Marie Laure answered cordially that we should come down the following week, and we did.

There began the bizarre and fruitful friendship, or love affair, that continues today.

At first I behaved as I felt she wanted me to. She encouraged gaudy and exhibitionistic comportment, partly in defiance of her formal background, partly to give herself an identity with the post-surrealist gang she hung out with. For instance: a few months after we met (the night of July 4, 1951, to be exact) she gave me a party. It was to celebrate the première of my *Six Irish Poems* by the radio orchestra with soloist Nell Tangeman (whom Marie Laure hated: my soprano friends frustrated her because *she* couldn't sing). That *soirée* was indistinguishable from a hundred others I would attend over the years. A buffet,

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groaning with champagne and smoked salmon and apricot tarts, voraciously stripped to a skeleton by rich old dukes and pompous movie queens elbowing their best friends as though they'd been starving for weeks, while Marie Laure, with a Gioconda smile, looked on. I arrived brash, open-necked, and above all, young. By 3 a.m. I'd downed who-knows-how-many magnums. Whereupon, in front of everyone, I approached the Vicomtesse, and with no conscious provocation gave her a whack that sent her reeling to the floor. *Mais il est fou*! they all screamed, as I was restrained by the *maître d'hôtel* and Guy Ferrand. But the noble hostess motioned for them to release me, then rose with a bemused stare of utter satisfaction: she had triumphed before her friends: somebody new *cared*.

Such obstreperousness was both feigned and short lived—an expression of dazzlement at suddenly and so easily meeting half of legendary Europe. But once the novelty wore off, my Quaker sense informed me that, above all, Marie Laure *offered the leisure to work*. She not only gave me a piano and sponsored concerts, but clothed, fed, and intermittently housed me; she has been the principal cause of my remaining in France to compose for that many years. At the same time, she has been my chief *confidente* and advisor. Insofar as sheer instruction is concerned she corresponds in my French Fifties to what Virgil Thomson was for me in my American Forties. My parents excepted, there is no doubt that she and Virgil are the two "older" people who've most influenced my thinking and my style—my life.

* * *

I'd much rather have known Nijinsky whom I've venerated since childhood, for he was what we all would like to have been: a flying man. But I did actually meet Barbara Hutton Troubetzkoy in flesh and blood.

She's a legend to all Americans of my generation because the inimitable Miriam Hopkins fifteen years ago made a movie about her called *The Richest Girl in the World*, and the movies are our history book. With my poet friends at age twelve, lovers of immortal women, we would discuss for hours the sumptuousness of Miss Hutton's life, her scandals, her jade screen. Later, in Tangier, I saw the house she'd built there, though I was told she never visited it.

Then one early evening recently, Marie Laure (because it is part of her profession, attending parties) took me to a *Cocktail* (as the French say) at the apartment of a Mr. S. and wife who spend their life looking out onto the Place Vendôme. I was already kind of tight from a *Cocktail* at Madame Bousquet's and one for Aix at the Véfour restaurant (joyously leading the kind of Parisian life I so despise in

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others), so that the home struck me as atrociously dreamy. Decorated only in purple (and its offshoots), the spacious place resembled a very dignified funeral parlor: a mauve bathroom, and a bedroom with mauve curtains (which were drawn), mauve light bulbs, sheets of lavender satin, and a dressing table with violet-tinted mirrors into which Louise de Vilmorin observed herself comb her hair. And there was a flood of rosy-mauve champagne flowing from room to purple room, and in this flood were floating dozens of beautiful thirty-seven-year-old pink gigolos of which *Le Tout Paris* abounds. We stood dizzily at the window watching a pretty purple sunset disappear behind the gray stone of the Ritz Hotel. And then we drank more sparkling burgundy as the guests began to thin out. Pretty soon I realized through a haze that I had been left alone on a red velvet couch beside the liquor table where a white butler kept pouring and pouring with an elegant sneer. Everything was hushed. From a room I had not yet seen came the languorous strains of the Rosenkavalier waltzes. Suddenly people began running in and out, nervously looking for smelling salts and mauve crystal cologne bottles, tearing their hair and exclaiming: "Oh, this time it's surely the end!" etc., and the waltzes kept playing sadly on. Finally Marie Laure came up to me saying something like: "It's Barbara Hutton, she had a stroke and is dying of stomach cancer in the next room." I was now allowed to go in too, as long as I promised not to stare, and to act (drunkenly) natural... There she was, dancing moodily with one of the forgotten gigolos, the two of them trembling slowly in the middle of the floor. She couldn't have weighed more than sixty pounds, and her rather moronic eyes looked like black wounds beneath an enormous hat. She fell upon the couch in a daze and asked to be alone with me for five minutes, and though nobody liked that idea since I was not famous and they would rather have worried about being natural in front of Miss Hutton and finding smelling salts etc., they acquiesced and went away to discuss her death. We talked about America and how nice I was. Then everyone came back and I was forced to leave.

Afterwards, at about eleven, Marie Laure and I, both quite depressed, went to the *Catelan* for dinner during which there was a tremendous thunderstorm.

* * *

My visit to Cocteau—to "the inspired Jean," as Paul Goodman calls him—was paid on Friday, last October sixth at eleven in the morning. A perfect sunny day.

I was in a state of terror which wouldn't have taken hold if I had just been going to see him cold. But I'd written him a warning of my approach in two flirtatious letters (snapshots of myself enclosed), and received eloquent and equally flirtatious replies.

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He lives at 35 rue Montpensier in a smallish and very low-ceilinged apartment overlooking the Palais-Royal garden, the hordes of playing children and the Véfour restaurant. (He can wave to Colette who lives on the same courtyard, but he spends most of his days now with his friend—Paul, from the film of *Les Enfants Terribles*—in the country at Milly; he can work nowhere else.)

He opened the door himself, and immediately showed me into a tiny room at the right where he followed me, locking the door, after telling the maid not to bother us for two hours. This tiny room had a tiny bed with a scarlet spread piled high with books, prints, current art and literary magazines whose pages had not been cut, a desk and a drafting table (each also piled high with books), a telegraph set (out of order), a blackboard reaching to the ceiling and on which was a chalk drawing by Jean of a boy's profile, a Siamese cat (female)... Cocteau himself wore a floor-length sky-blue dressing gown cut like a medieval priest's; the sleeves completely covered his hands, though his gestures were so violent that I caught frequent glimpses of the longest fingers I have ever seen. His voice has no relation to the one we've heard at the movies: it sounded rather higher; he talked incessantly. He didn't sit down once, but continually paced the little room, occasionally petting the cat in passing. His favorite words are *con* and *emmerder*, and he scarcely used a sentence without one or the other. Yet everything about the congested atmosphere was elegance itself: none of these crumbling corners one finds in even the grandest French homes.

At no time did I feel the hot, lazy, demoralizing magic which proved so fatal for Maurice Sachs during his friendship with Cocteau twenty years ago. Nor did I find him beautiful. He did strike me as more "sincere" than I would have guessed, and *au fond* had the ideas of a great artist. From his social style (that of an actor), I have no reason to believe that the identical conversation was not repeated with the next admiring young American who came to call. Nevertheless I tried to talk as much as I could, and as he ended every phrase with a brutal *quoi* or *hein*?, it was impossible not to answer. Each time I said something with which he agreed he would roll it up into a *formule* and throw it back to me. Though we seemed almost always in agreement (far from passively) I can think of no one who might fatigue me more, so stereotyped has he become, as though he were before one of his own mirrors! He had the graciousness to ask if I'd learned French as a child along with English. On learning I'd been speaking it just a year, he feigned astonishment.

We spoke *en somme* of three things: how, why, and where the creator does or should create; how a possible war should effect a creative person; sex and crime in American cities (other than New York). Creating is like shitting; indeed, this was the image he used (*Quand*

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*j'ai chié mon Orphée*, etc.) though he might have said "when such an idea fell from heaven," which for me would be more expedient. The artist must grow ever more selfish, must never seek to rearrange the world. *Il doit s'en foutre des guerres*... Like all the French, Cocteau is more amused than fascinated by Doctor Kinsey (and by psychoanalysts).

* * *

Julien Green is obsessed by statues. Not just in his novels; but also, from one standpoint, his conversation and life may be said to consist of little else (like myself, he is essentially Protestant—despite his Catholicism—and is therefore suspicious of the slightest motion of his little finger). One day, while walking together through the Tuileries on our way home from one of the innumerable Paris tea shops of which only Julien knows the whereabouts, he told me that once he had a plaster cast made of one of the half-life-sized Apollos from the Louvre. But he had toyed with it so much that it had finally collapsed. He then told me he used to have a friend—a fifteen-year-old Swedish writer of bad verse—who fell in love with one of the statues in that very garden (by the fountain near the rue Cambon). One evening during the war he arranged to get locked in the garden, whereupon he raped the statue all night long, and then fell out of love... Julien says that his idea of Paradise is to be alone in a room full of nothing but beautiful statues. And I, being American, quite understand the fear of all that is flesh.

* * *

My New Year's Eve was pretty much like this: lunch with Claude Benedick can be skipped as of no importance; then I changed money at Julius'; then I went to Milhaud's to finish a nervous dark afternoon of thaw, and to begin the end of a year. Milhaud for twenty-five years has lived in a barren apartment, Boulevard de Clichy, looking down into the million wild lights of Pigalle's merry-go-rounds. He is enormously fat (it is said that his sweat glands don't function), and literally does not walk: his life is spent in a chromium wheelchair. But his voice is music itself. Being the most significant of the "Six," he is less *maître* than any of them: he has none of Poulenc's elegance, Tailleferre's *bêtise*, Auric's worldliness, Durey's non-existence, or Hönegger's weariness. He loves youth and he lives for music, and when he tells me good things about my work I forget what anyone else ever said. As with all elderly composers, I felt a certain sadness come into Milhaud's expression when I entered; a feeling of disappearance before new growth, as if he were saying to himself: "Soon this boy will be breathing my air."

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Coming out onto the always-exciting mystery of the Boulevard de Clichy I had difficulty finding a taxi, so I arrived late at the *réveillon* of Marie Laure. There was lots of champagne, quarreling, and tears; but no sense of Christmas, though I kept screaming the child Christ was born. I recall that someone described a Chinese torture of a rat in a cage, the open side of which is placed against the buttocks; fire is applied to the other side of the cage, forcing the rat, in his terror and suffering, to gnaw his way into the victim's body by way of the rectum. We all became drunk, and at eleven the florist delivered a practical joke sent by the Lopez': a life-sized figure made of flowers, which looked like Frankenstein dressed as a woman. It took three hours to burn, and expired with hideous fiery twists.

After this, everything crumbles; I remember only Oscar, Balthus, Etienne P., and Dora, and have a hazy recollection receiving Man Ray the next day—Heddy (naked) in bed beside me, eating sandwiches and saying to the beautiful Christian Mégret about me, "*Ne vous en faites pas pour moi; je ne baise jamais mes soeurs!*"

* * *

A mouse has just died in my piano. I believe she entered there to give birth, but was killed instead by the hammer strokes.

* * *

Stella Adler, who pretends never to recognize me, explains that all *goyim* look alike to her.

* * *

Sam Barber is in town again, rather sad and unenthusiastic, though witty and sympathetic. He tells of Copland's interview with Senator McCarthy. Copland, after a dignified explanation as to why he had lent his name to certain lists, suddenly realized that McCarthy didn't know who or what he was.

* * *

I spent the evening, rue Christine, with Alice Toklas (whom I'd never known, except for two seconds, years ago, at Nathalie Barney's) because I needed information about Stein's copyright, etc. She is small, and old as a unicorn flying through the sad old-fashioned smoke of other autumns, deaf, with Virgil's style and accent, quick as a whip. She seemed lonely in the endless suite of rooms filled with unframed masterpieces and electric heaters; and I had the impression she didn't

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want me to go. As I was leaving I noticed for the first time by the door three small and marvelous Picassos. Miss Toklas: "Gertrude always used to say that if the house were burning down and she could only take one picture, it would be those three!"

* * *

For a month the weather has been all balmy and soaked in sunlight, certainly rare for a Paris autumn, especially when night falls at four. The French reaction to this good weather is of course suspicious: as soon as something doesn't go according to tradition the French suspect the worst—in this case it's radioactivity. And at the florist's window, rue du Boccador, there are orange roses on display, real *orange* roses!

* * *

I had the weird pleasure of meeting Iris Adrian in flesh and blood, at the Saint James bar (drinking ginger ale, which I haven't seen for three years). Said she, "I don't care *who* you are, but I like you anyway. Sit down!"

It was Margaret Bonds' friend Muriel Landers who introduced us; they're singing together in Jack Benny's show which is touring Europe. I was with Elliott Stein, who explained to me that I. A. had made three hundred movies, always taking the part of a dumb blonde, notably in "Blondie" pictures, and in *Lady of Burlesque* with Barbara Stanwyck. "And I hope to make 300 more," said Iris. "There's a lot of laughs in that racket. And a lot of tears!" Her hair is so blonde it's silver; she must be forty. She continues: "So you're writing an opera! Hope you make money. In show biz there's only two kinds of audiences: the kind you got, and the kind you don't. The kind you don't got don't pay off, and I don't care *how* good you think your opera is... You fellows live in Paris? You must speak a little French by now? Why'd you leave the States? Of course it's easier for a guy to live away than for a girl with a husband and children." She says "children," not "kids," showing she takes marriage very seriously. Her voice is loud, sad and steady. She drops her cigarette and speaks to it as it lies on the floor: "Goddam you! I'll get you back. Don't just lay there looking back like that! You won't get away from *me*... Write for television boys. *That's* what pays off." I go away feeling touched, knowing these girls live with their mothers. Why should I explain that our paths and standards vary?

* * *

The knuckles of my hand, and my arm up to the elbow, are shot with pains from working so much in the composer's cramped position. But never have I been so pleased with my own music: I have a

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recognizable style. At the moment I am polishing and copying the chorale pieces I wrote last month at Marie Laure's. Am also writing three "medieval" songs to be sung by Gordon Heath; they are in the manner of Folksong. Folksong (that is to say, "Art in the rough") has never interested me; I have always thought it a medium for unmusical communists. I remember as an adolescent in Chicago I was vaguely acquainted with some now-vanished members of the YCL. They would sit around for hours listening to records of Burl Ives or Richard Dyer Bennett, expiring in joy at what they thought was the "true expression." This is because folk music has appeal through association: by way of the word. Real music has no fixed associations. The artist *cannot* be concerned with politics, for a regime may change each year, but a work of art remains. I prefer folk music as rewritten by, say, Roy Harris, than in its original form. Art is made by tricks played in memory, and our souvenir of an experience is never exact. Art is the artifice of recollection...

* * *

Yesterday Guy and I passed the day swimming with Henri Lhébrard (and friend) on the wild beach of Safi. The only other bathers were a group of native whores taking Sunday off form the town brothel. While their boy friends played a sort of baseball with a tin can, the whores (naked) dressed up in seaweed to attract our attention. But the baseball was also to attract our attention: that is how Morocco is made.

On the road to Safi there are more camels than anywhere in the world. A camel has terrific strength; he can take off your arm with one bite. The leg bones are of unshatterable steel. A car—a "baby Simca"—can smash into a camel and be reduced to smoking crumbs; a few moments after, the camel, unscratched, stands off to consider the wreckage, chewing calmly, and smiling his smile of stupid disdain...

* * *

Madame P. asked us all to dine with her *à la Maison Arabe, un restaurant chic (aux salons particuliers) blotti en pleine Medina.* She's the kind of woman who is only found in colonial towns: around forty-five, hair bleached pale pink, the withered face of a monkey, silly and talkative, wealthy (but forced to spend the winter in Morocco away from her elegant Paris friends because of her husband's work), crazy about good-looking boys and the "artistic personality." We were six in a private dining room full of rose and silver cushions like a DeMille harem. I detest eating with my hands and see no reason for doing so

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if one is not the guest of an Arab. Yet this is how we proceeded even with a greasy pigeon pie covered with cinnamon. And then Madame P. asks the question I despise the most (the question showing that people may love artists, but can't love art): "What magnificent inspiration you must find in Marrakech, you, a composer so attuned to beauty! Have you ever written better?" If I *have* written better it's because I've turned my back to the view. It's hard for people to realize that an artist's inspiration is always present and all he needs to express it is concentration; beautiful surroundings are disconcerting. Casanova's marvelous book was inspired by a prison cell. Ravel pulled down the shade when he composed and Wagner closed the palace door. We all know that the beauty of art is interior, but if the composer writes what he sees in nature, he'll cultivate nothing more than Cyril Scott's lotus or MacDowell's wild rose. I've come to this country to work, not to make love. If I allow myself to go astray to Tinerhir, which is the garden of Eden, then I am lost. For instance, Sunday we took a long ride. The sun was setting when we returned at six and the highway was covered with mad people whose eyes were turned toward the ramparts of Marrakech which looked like the wall of China —an orange velvet belt burning for miles in the dying sun full of green blood. Nothing could be more silent, so silent I could hear my own circulation like a waterfall of blood in my skull, the noise of blood; and the sadness that always accompanies beauty as we entered the city gate and came to watch the death of the sun in the Place Jemâa-el-Fnâa. Then the lamps begin to go on, one by one, in the square; the fire-eater starts to swallow his torch; under a hundred tents supper is begun.

* * *

Rain, and the room where I write is abuzz with mating flies who get caught even in my hair and make me shriek. If only this rain could also purify my music, for I don't know into what generation I've been placed. I use twelve notes designed after a pattern my own ear craves (all honest composers must do this *d'ailleurs*); but am I too young to add new ideas to my elders who are my influence (and who say, "If it were twenty years ago I should follow these children,") or too old to amuse myself playing with the experimenters who are not precocious but grim? The worst of it is that I just don't care. Meanwhile I read and read, not as an intellectual (I don't seek to instruct myself) but for my truest joy. And meanwhile I play the piano some: the Chopin *Ballades* of my childhood, or old songs of my own making. And meanwhile, it rains.

* * *

Paris. It appears to blossom at the moment of my going, blossom

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in Fall. *Oh bien sûr, tous les emmerdements habituels:* I have to renew my *carte d'identité* and passport, pack my trunk, see individually six hundred musicians—the numerous details which give me gooseflesh. But I'm scared to go; everything stands still, eyes governed by heart see what they're told, and I adore Paris, am scared to go.

The past. New York. Twelve years ago I came wide-eyed into the sin and chic of the Empire City, fresh from Curtis Institute where Menotti was my professor—and professors are above suspicion. Now in those days the chic audiences of a particular brand went only to concerts of Povla Frisjh (or Landowska, or later Tourel, or Gold and Fizdale). What was my surprise at seeing Menotti at a Frisjh intermission! These are the contradictions of growing-up.

* * *

Rain, drizzle. Rather soft autumn weather. These are my final Paris days (Auric thinks they're the final days *of* Paris) because in two weeks I'll be on a boat going home. So everything—friends, lawns, neighborhoods, the sky—takes on a deeper, more immediate meaning.

Rubinstein gave a *souper chez lui* last night after his great Chopin concert at the Chaillot and there I found a gorgeous series of former lady friends who didn't recognize me because now my hair's its normal color. Before them I asked François Valéry (whose dream it is to die in the lions' cage): "A male or female lion?" I guess it's an indiscreet question.

* * *

Saw Julien again before leaving and we walked ecstatically through the Palais Royal (where we had been in other weather) into the rue Vivienne (and Julien showed me a house "where wicked things take place,—very wicked!" though he wasn't sure of which floor), and on to the little store of the Bibliothèque Nationale to buy a pair of earrings designed as Merovingian owls for his sister Anne whom he has never allowed me to see.

* * *

Barring death, there's no old lost forgotten friend we'll never come across again some day. It's a matter of living long enough to learn the size of cycles. But sometimes it would seem better to keep far-agos buried instead of always wishing to find again, and seeing only wrinkled lovers without conversations. I cannot help the overwhelming memory of snow and poetry in Chicago, at Northwestern, those days, during the learning cycle; the smartest thing I can now do for that lovely sadness is to keep a thought a thought and not try to remake it

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squalid-real by stamping back after ten years to find it all diminished nut-sized. I knew Roditi when I was a child there; years and years have gone by and now today here we are in Paris which too will be recall. Roditi who recently used these astounding words: "Well, the suffering is over now"; whose little poem of jealousy I've just made into a song, my only valid gesture since returning to Paris twelve days ago, twelve days of tension, all the hysterical nerves of my departure for America without a cent and full of debts: all these big, these little problems cease the day we die. This hovering around the past: I remember in 1936 when as a family we visited Europe, and at the American soldiers' cemetery of Belleau Wood I saw mother cry upon the tomb of her young brother buried there long before my birth; I wondered at her tears for something so remote from me; today there is less distance between the first war's end and her tears, than between her tears and the present moment, yet our summer in 1936 is clear as crystal to me. All these are landmarks static in static time; we move from one to another down the road until we reach the one melodramatically signaled with our own end; then, for all we know, it starts or stops again...


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# NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

## FICTION

**Donald Barthelme** *(Several Garlic Tales)* is a thirty-four-year-old Texan now living in New York City. He has worked as a reporter, editor, and museum director, and served in the Army in Korea. A book of his short stories, *Come Back, Dr. Caligari*, was published in 1964; he is currently working on a novel. Among magazines where his work has appeared are *The New Yorker*, *Contact*, *New World Writing*, and *Harper's Bazaar*.

**Jerome Charyn** *(The Man Who Grew Younger)* is 28 years old and was graduated from Columbia College in 1959. He has taught English in New York high schools; and is now teaching at Stanford University. He has published short stories in *Commentary* and *Mademoiselle;* is the author of two novels, *Once Upon A Droshky* and *On The Darkening Green;* and is working on a new novel, a play, and a collection of short stories to be entitled *The Man Who Grew Younger*.


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## INTERVIEWS

**Thomas Clark** *(Interview with Allen Ginsberg)* is currently teaching at the University of Essex, England, after two years as a Cambridge undergraduate, and four years at the University of Michigan. He has published poetry in many magazines in England and America, and has been, for the past two years, poetry editor of THE PARIS REVIEW. In addition, he edits *The Wivenhoe Park Review*, and *Twice*.

**Michel Manoll** *(Interview with Blaise Cendrars)* is a French poet and critic, who edited the avant-garde magazine *Le Pain Blanc* before the Second World War. For many years he lived in the Sarthe, but is currently in Paris where he does occasional radio interviews with writers. One of these provided the text for the present interview.

**William Brandon** *(Introduction to Cendrars' Interview, and translator of Cendrars' Interview and Prose)* has written three historical books about the American West. His short fiction has been published in numerous American magazines. During the 1950's he lived in France; currently, he is in San Francisco.

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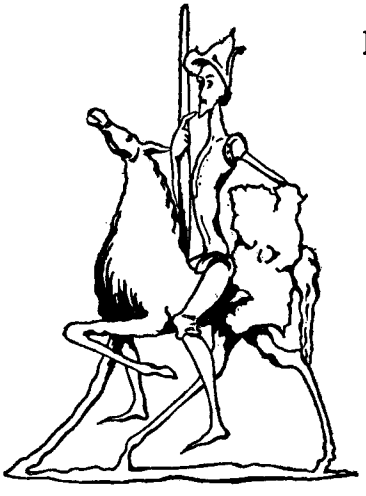
**POETRY**

**Ted Berrigan** was born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1934. After serving in the Army he attended the University of Tulsa. He now lives in New York with his wife and son, and edits "C" Press, which published his book, *The Sonnets*, in 1964. He is also at work on a novel, *Looking for Chris*.

**Galway Kinnell** had two poems in THE PARIS REVIEW≠*33*, His most recent books are a translation of the *Poems of Francois Villon* (Signet) last spring, and a novel *Black Light*, just out at Houghton Mifflin. He lives in New York.

**Joanne Kyger** lives in San Francisco; she will be traveling in Europe with her husband for six months this year. Her book of poems, *The Tapestry and the Web*, was published in 1965 by the Four Seasons Foundation.

**Harry Mathews** has contributed poems to *The Hudson Review*, *The Quarterly Review*, *Locus Solus*, *Art and Literature*, and *The Lugano Review*. His first novel, *The Conversions*, was published in THE PARIS REVIEW # *27*, and a long excerpt from his second, *Tlooth*, in THE PARIS REVIEW # *34*. *Tlooth* will be published later this year as the first in a series of Paris Review Editions, published by Doubleday.

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**Charles Olson** was born in 1910 in Worcester, Mass., and now lives in Gloucester. Two sections from his *Maximus Poems* appeared in THE PARIS REVIEW # *32*. Auerhahn Press has published *Maximus from Dogtown - I* and Jargon/Corinth, which brought out *The Maximus Poems* in 1960, is now preparing to publish the second and third volumes of that long poem.

**Ron Padgett,** a native of Oklahoma and a graduate of Columbia, is currently in Paris working on translations from Guillaume Apollinaire and Pierre Reverdy.

**Gary Snyder** was born in 1930 in San Francisco. He is now in Kyoto Japan. He has published four collections of poems; a new book of short poems, *The Back Country*, and his collected poems, *Ranges*, will soon be brought out in America.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

**Derek Boshier,** the cover artist, is a 28-year-old native of Portsmouth, England. After studying at the Royal College of Art, he had a traveling scholarship to India in 1962-63. He has been frequently represented in group shows of young British painters, most recently in Brussels and Paris.

**Richard Royce,** who illustrated the contents page and Jerome Charyn story, was born in New York and studied with the late Viennese sculptor Leo Steppat. He has had three one-man shows, and is currently living in Paris working at William Stanley Hayter's *Atelier 17*.


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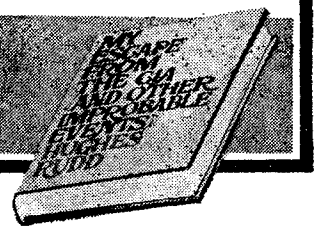


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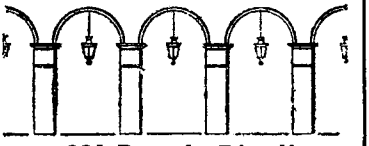

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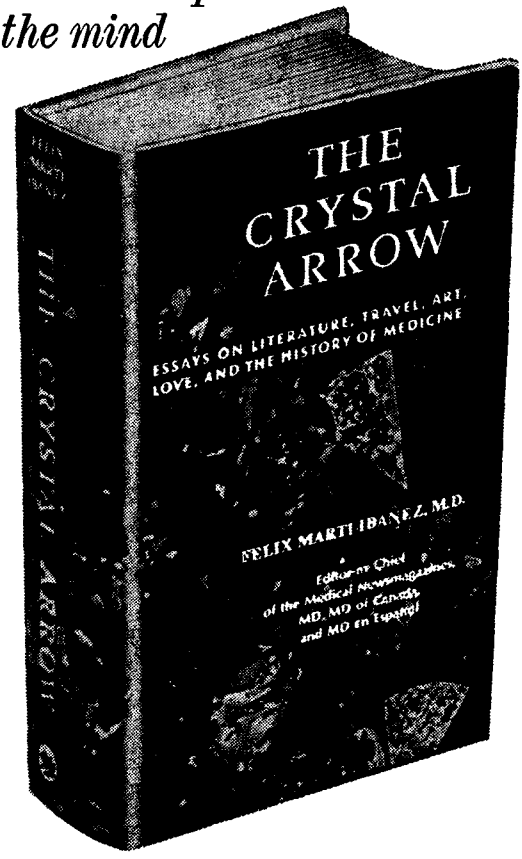


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